The New Criterion

December 1987

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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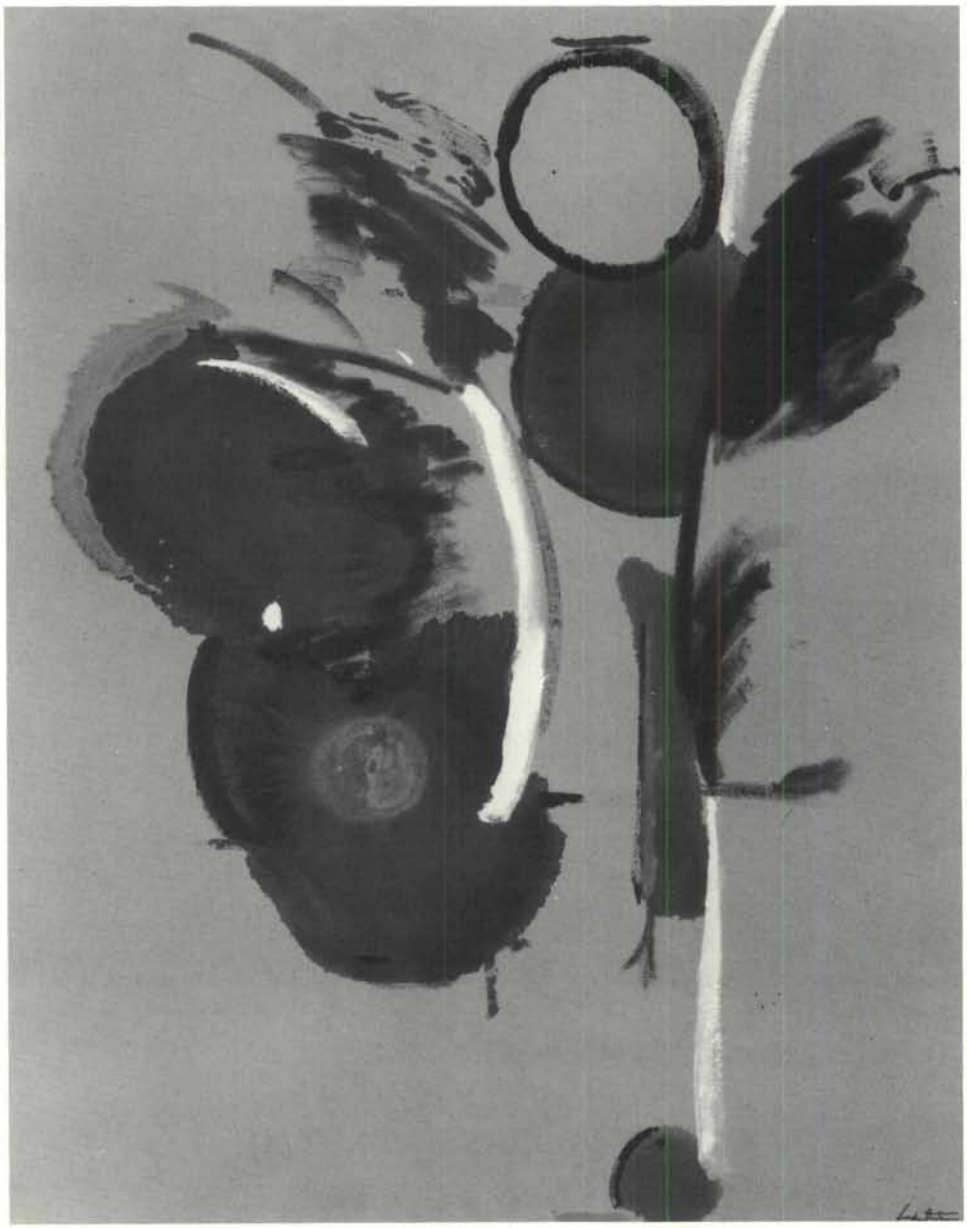

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Jed Perl's study of French art after World War One, *Paris Without End,* will be published in the fall of 1988 by North Point Press.

Eva Resnikova wrote on Trisha Brown for the November issue of *The New Criterion.*

Louis Simpson's most recent book is *The Character of the Poet,* a collection of essays.

Charles Tomlinson's *Collected Poems* was published by Oxford in 1986.

James W. Tuttleton wrote on Edgar Allan Poe for our November issue.

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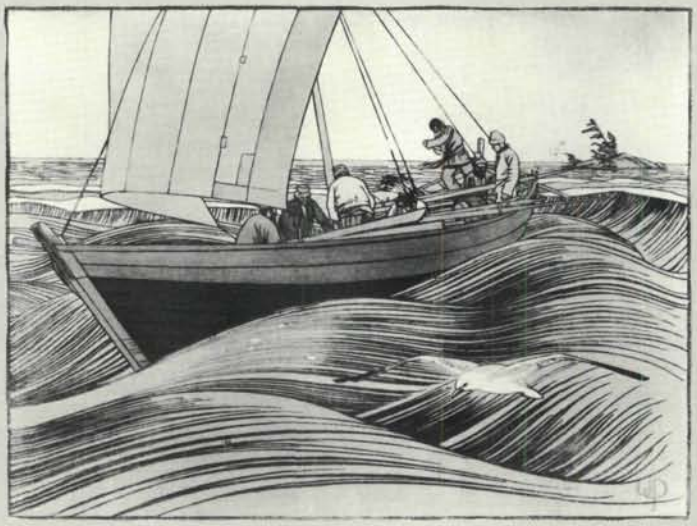

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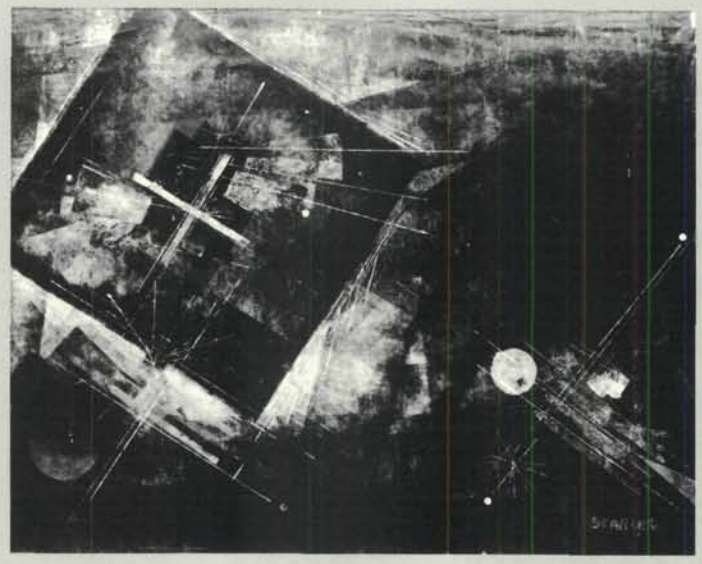

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Last—or lost—intellectuals?

by Hilton Kramer

It has already been remarked in these pages that it has been left, by and large, to the political Left to write the recent history of American intellectual life.[1] Opponents of the Left and defectors from its many political factions may loom very large as figures of consequence in that history, and more than a few of these opponents and defectors have written the memoirs and autobiographies upon which so many recent histories of American intellectual life are based. But the actual histories and most of the analyses of these histories have been the work of academics who, in one degree or another, are the intellectual heirs of the New Left that achieved, in conjunction with the counter-culture, such an immense and baleful influence on American life in the Sixties and that has remained a powerful—and now, alas, an institutionalized—force in both the culture and politics of the present day.

There are no doubt many reasons why the Left has met with so little resistance in commandeering this history, which is in so many ways the history of the Left's moral and intellectual betrayal of its own stated ideals. One reason, certainly, is that the historical profession in this country has itself very largely become a kind of intellectual satrapy of the political Left. For the larger reason, however, we must look beyond the boundaries of the historical profession—to the daunting fact that the ideas of the New Left, currently attired in the raiment of middle-class respectability, constitute a force far more powerful today than it ever was in the Sixties and early Seventies—the heyday of the New Left's visibility as a radical movement. For then the radicals were on the *outside,* conducting their guerrilla warfare against the established institutions of culture and politics, whereas now they are commonly to be found in significant numbers *inside* these institutions, in many cases actually running them and defining their goals.

Whether we look at the media or the academy, the arts or public policy, the situation is very much the same. From the lecture halls of the Harvard Law School to the glossy pages of *The New Yorker,* from the boardrooms of innumerable universities, museums, and publishing houses to the classrooms where the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences are being deconstructed and destroyed, it is the policies and doctrines bequeathed to us by the New Left in its alliance with the counter-culture that determine the principal agenda and exert the dominant influence. More and more we see that agenda reflected not only in the decisions of faculty senates but in the deliberations of the United States Senate—the campaign against Judge Bork was a classic example—and its influence is now as regularly discernible in the editorial pages of *The New York Times* as it is in *The New York*

1 See "Writing the History of the New York Intellectuals" in *The New Criterion* for June 1986.

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Review of Books and *The Nation*. Ideas once considered too radical to be taken seriously outside the sectarian councils of the New Left are now the commonplace pieties of uncounted academics, journalists, congressional administrative assistants, and foundation executives. The *révoltés* of yesteryear may have exchanged the costume of revolution for Brooks Brothers suits and Alcott & Andrews executive ensembles, but only in order to accomplish by bureaucratic maneuver, administrative pressure, and incessant media blitz what could not so effectively be achieved by violence and protest: the implementation of a new cultural and political orthodoxy.

One of the fateful consequences of this ghastly turn in our history has been the danger it has posed to the kind of independent intellectual—independent, that is, of established institutions and political orthodoxies—who has traditionally served as both a vital source of critical intelligence and an effective challenge to conventional wisdom. In the twentieth century, of course, many—though by no means all—of the most interesting of these independent intellectuals came out of the Left, and most especially out of one or another manifestation of disenchantment with the Left. Probably because it has spawned so many more untenable illusions about society and culture than any other political movement, the Left has been immeasurably the most copious in producing talented renegades of every conceivable persuasion. They occupy a central place in the intellectual history of the modern era, and it is remarkable, to say the least, that no historian—either of the Left or of any other political persuasion—has attempted to tell their story or assess their achievement. Or, indeed, to look into the question of their successors.

We have had, to be sure, a plethora of books devoted to the so-called New York Intellectuals—that famous "herd of independent minds," as Harold Rosenberg once dubbed them. For better or for worse, these now appear to constitute a special field of academic study. But with little variation these books all follow a single scenario. According to this scenario, there are the good guys and the bad guys. The good guys are those who remained loyal to, or at least reverted to, their radical calling. The bad guys are those who "sold out." That there were sound historical and political reasons for repudiating the pieties of radical ideology; that in fact there were morally compelling reasons for doing so; and that the intellectual history of the Left in this century has proved to be a virtual wasteland of discredited ideas, broken promises, and shabby hypocrisies—none of this has been taken into account. The governing assumption has been that virtue inheres in the doctrines of the Left, and no categorical questioning of those doctrines is to be permitted. These books are, in other words, a mirror reflection of what is now established as the conventional wisdom, both inside the academy and out.

At first glance, the book that Russell Jacoby has now published under the title, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe,* would appear to mark a departure from this self-serving and historically inaccurate perspective.[2] Mr. Jacoby is keenly aware that something awful has happened to the heirs—those, as he says, "under forty-five or so"—of the intellectual Left; that their ideas, their interests, their style, and their entire outlook on life are marked by a debilitating intellectual sterility and an abject failure to come to terms with the reality of history. One could hardly hope to find a more devastating criticism of the work of such representative figures as Richard Sennett and Marshall Berman than the one contained in *The Last Intellectuals.* Mr. Jacoby sees very clearly that books such as *The Fall of Public Man* and *All That is Solid Melts into Air* "mark not a vital New York culture, in which ideas and language still count, but its afterlife," and he is positively unforgiving in his account of the way the reigning academ-

2 *The Last Intellectuals,* by Russell Jacoby; Basic Books, 290 pages, $18.95.

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ics on the Left have taken refuge in arcane disciplines and an incomprehensible terminology, thereby abandoning all interest in what he calls "a wider educated world."

What Mr. Jacoby yearns for is the return of what he calls the "public" or "nonacademic" intellectual—precisely the type of independent intellectual who was once responsible for so much that was lively, interesting, and consequential in discussions of politics, society, and the arts. It is Mr. Jacoby's view that the younger generation has failed to produce such intellectuals. He writes:

> To put it sharply: the habitat, manners, and idiom of intellectuals have been transformed within the past fifty years. Younger intellectuals no longer need or want a larger public; they are almost exclusively professors. Campuses are their homes; colleagues their audience; monographs and specialized journals their media. Unlike past intellectuals they situate themselves within fields and disciplines—for good reason. Their jobs, advancement, and salaries depend on the evaluation of specialists, and their dependence affects the issues broached and the language employed.

And further:

> An irony colors this inquiry into a missing generation. The intellectuals absent from public life are largely those who came of age in the 1960s . . . . How is it possible that these veterans of movements, who often targeted the university, derided their teachers, and ridiculed past thinkers could mature into such earnest professionals, quieter than older intellectuals? . . . After the smoke lifted, many younger intellectuals had never left school; others discovered there was nowhere else to go. They became radical sociologists, Marxist historians, feminist theorists, but not quite public intellectuals.

In his barely containable nostalgia for the good old days, however, Mr. Jacoby is plagued by the thought that what the independent intellectuals of an earlier period—the Thirties or Forties or Fifties, say—produced in their writings might not add up to as much as it is commonly assumed to have. He is particularly skeptical about the accomplishments of the New York intellectuals.

> Even as I deal in individuals and journals from the 1950s and earlier [he writes], I do not want to foster the illusion of their unassailable superiority; even as I argue that a generation is missing, I do not want to lionize the previous generations—and this is especially true of past New York intellectuals, who have produced fewer enduring works than is supposed. To put it sharply [he really means bluntly]: if the intellectuals from the 1950s tower over the cultural landscape right into the 1980s, this is not because the towers are so high but because the landscape is so flat.

This is not in itself a stupid observation, but it remains a little empty until Mr. Jacoby puts his cards on the table and tells us exactly where he believes the "enduring works" of this earlier period, however few in number, are to be found. And when that happens—it comes early on, too; on page twenty-five—*The Last Intellectuals* suffers a collapse from which it never recovers.

According to Mr. Jacoby, the really "first rate" work of the Fifties is to be found in the writings of Dwight Macdonald, C. Wright Mills, and Lewis Mumford. As an example of what is inferior—or anyway, not "first rate"—he cites the work of Lionel Trilling:

> His reach, in fact, was limited, no further than Anglo-American literature; his social theory, thin; his philosophy, weak. His essays which often originated as lectures to admiring audiences, suffer on the cold page.

And so on. In Mr. Jacoby's pantheon of independent, or public, intellectuals, Dwight Macdonald and C. Wright Mills and sundry others—Irving Howe and I. F. Stone, among them—are judged to have kept the faith, which is of course the Left-liberal faith, the faith in socialism, if not in revolution, whereas Lionel Trilling is consigned to the company of the sell-outs. And so we are

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back, yet again, to the scenario of good guys and bad guys, with the Left representing all virtue and opposition to the Left consigned to the trash can of history. One can only ask: With models like Dwight Macdonald and C. Wright Mills on offer, not to mention Irving Howe and I. F. Stone, is it any wonder that there should be a lost generation of "public" intellectuals on the Left? And if it were really true that there is such a lost generation of independent intellectuals—it isn't true, of course—would it be anything to regret if it meant not having to endure yet another version of Macdonald's political fatuities and of Mills's manic embrace of Cuban totalitarianism?

The truth is, we haven't been so lucky. There is still plenty of this Left-liberal cant polluting the public print media, not to mention the television screen. What is a fact, to be sure, is that the younger writers offering up this stuff on such a gargantuan scale today are pretty dismal. Mr. Jacoby is certainly right about that. Yet he doesn't seem to know where to look for an explanation for the decline in the intellectual quality of the Left. He talks about the disappearance of bohemia, the shifts in the economy, changing patterns of employment, and so on—but he never considers for a moment the possibility that the decline he is so keenly aware of has something to do with the substance of the ideas that the intellectual Left continues to propagate. He certainly doesn't understand that these ideas, in attaining an unprecedented influence in the media, in the academy, and in so many institutions governing both culture and politics, are now the conventional wisdom, and it is only in opposition to such ideas that any independent intellectual energy is currently to be found. The independent intellectuals were always, as Mr. Jacoby acknowledges, "an endangered species," and they continue to be today, but they have by no means disappeared from the scene. He has simply been looking for them in the wrong place—on the Left—because, in truth, for Mr. Jacoby the only real intellectual is a Left intellectual. It is no wonder, then, that he believes he has seen the "last" of them, for the Left today is indeed afflicted with a bad case of intellectual mediocrity and academicism. It has, or ought to have, a bad conscience about the past, and it has no workable vision of the future. Insofar as it is concerned with the debacle of the intellectual Left, *The Last Intellectuals* ought really to have been called *The Lost Intellectuals.* But the fact that the Left in this country has gained power while at the same time losing its mind, so to speak, has not been overlooked by that saving remnant of independent intellectuals, whether young or not so young, who have either lost their faith in the ideas of the Left or never had any to begin with. Fortunately for us, these independent intellectuals are very much with us, and by no means the last of their kind—even if, to sentimentalists of the Left like Mr. Jacoby, they remain invisible.

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Passage to India: the career of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

by Bruce Bawer

Probably most Americans who recognize the name of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala know her mainly as a screenwriter, one third of the celebrated international movie-making team whose other members are the Indian producer Ismail Merchant and the American director James Ivory. In this country, at least, Jhabvala and her partners are known almost exclusively for three recent films that were based upon major modern novels: *The Europeans* (1978) and *The Bostonians* (1984) both derived from works by Henry James, and *A Room with a View* was an adaptation of one of E. M. Forster's less familiar novels. Though many reviewers carped about the casting and the slow pace (among other things) of the first two films, even the harshest critics almost invariably praised the filmmakers for their seriousness, for their wonderful attention to period detail, and for their manifest effort to be as faithful as possible not only to the word of the text but to James's tone and sensibility. The word "literate" was widely invoked—and, at a time when films often seem to be more illiterate than ever, the literateness of the Ivory-Merchant-Jhabvala productions was more than enough to inspire fervent expectations, on the part of many critics who were unhappy with the two James adaptations, that in time a truly magnificent film would be forthcoming from the team. These expectations, in most instances, seem to have been satisfied with the release of *A Room with a View*. This splendid film received better notices than either of its two immediate predecessors; it was nominated for the Academy Award for best picture and earned Jhabvala the award for best screenplay adaptation. When she appeared on the awards telecast last spring to accept her statuette, it was doubtless the first time most Americans had heard her name.

Despite her relative obscurity in this country, however, Jhabvala's writing career has been a long and distinguished one. Her motion-picture partnership with Ivory and Merchant dates back to the early Sixties; prior to the films I have mentioned, the team collaborated on a number of productions, none of which was shown widely in the United States. In addition, Jhabvala has written ten novels—the most celebrated of them being the Booker Prize-winning *Heat and Dust*—and several collections of short stories. Most of these books, if obtainable at all in this country, have hitherto been available only in British editions; but, largely as a result (one assumes) of the success of *A Room with a View,* that situation has lately begun to change. Both *Heat and Dust* and the 1973 novel *Travelers,* as well as the short-story collection *Out of India,* have recently been issued by the Fireside division of Simon and Schuster in handsome, well-distributed paperback editions. Alongside them on the bookstore shelves is Jhabvala's newly published novel, *Three Continents.* As if this were not enough compensation for years of stateside neglect, during the months

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of September and October the Asia Society in New York held screenings of a number of Ivory-Merchant films—six of them scripted by Jhabvala—as part of a twenty-fifth anniversary tribute to the team. Though she has been writing fiction and movies for more than a quarter of a century, then, it is not much of an exaggeration to say that Jhabvala is only now being introduced to a broad American public. There could hardly be a more appropriate occasion to examine some of the highlights of this most interesting—and, on these shores, largely neglected—career.[1]

Probably one important reason for America's neglect of Jhabvala's novels is that most of them—as well as the majority of her pre-Henry James screenplays—are set in the country where she has lived, whether full- or part-time, for decades: India. Though she still spends several months of the year on the subcontinent, her principal residence is currently in New York. The problematical question, however, is whether Jhabvala herself—born in Germany of Polish parents, and educated in England—can be considered Indian. Her own answer to this question, given in an essay entitled "Myself in India" (which serves as the introduction to her recent story collection *Out of India*), is no. "I have lived in India for most of my adult life," she declares at the beginning of the essay. "My husband is Indian and so are my children. I am not, and less so every year." India, she goes on to say, is a country that one either loves or hates; it offers "a special problem of adjustment for the sort of people who come today, who tend to be liberal in outlook and have been educated to be sensitive and receptive to other cultures. But it is not always easy to be sensitive and receptive to India: there comes a point where you have to close up in order to protect yourself." Her reason for living in India, she tells us—and I quote this at length because I think it helps to explain some of the distinctive qualities of her fiction—is that

> my strongest human ties are here. If I hadn't married an Indian, I don't think I would ever have come here for I am not attracted—or used not to be attracted—to the things that usually bring people to India. I know I am the wrong type of person to live here. To stay and endure, one should have a mission and a cause, to be patient, cheerful, unselfish, strong. I am a central European with an English education and a deplorable tendency to constant self-analysis. I am irritable and have weak nerves.

She is not, in other words, the type who has come to this land of desperate poverty—a poverty of which she, in her very nice air-conditioned house, is nonetheless always vividly aware—to be of service as a doctor or social worker. "I often think," she writes, "that perhaps this is the only condition under which Europeans have any right to be here." (According to a recent article by Dinitia Smith in *New York* magazine, Jhabvala's reason for living part of the year in New York is that "by 1976, she had grown overwhelmed by the subcontinent.") If her fiction is predominantly about "modern, well-off, cultured Westernized Indians," it is because her way of adjusting to life in India is to do her best to ignore the backward and hungry multitudes (which she refers to continually as a "great animal" on whose back she rides). Yet she doesn't associate with many Westernized Indians, either, for she believes that their social lives are synthetic, their conversation empty ("Everything they say . . . is not prompted by anything they really feel strongly about but by what they think they ought to feel strongly about"), their perspective on India's poverty

1 *Three Continents*, by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala; William Morrow & Company, 384 pages, $18.95. As for the other Jhabvala books discussed in this essay, *Esmond in India* is available in a paperback edition from Penguin Books U.K.; *The Householder* in paperback from Norton; *Out of India*, *Heat and Dust*, and *Travelers* in paperback from Fireside Books (Simon and Schuster); and *In Search of Love and Beauty* in paperback from Penguin Books U.S.A.

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and backwardness thoroughly detached. They talk about India "as if it were some *other* place—as if it were a subject for debate—an abstract subject—and not a live animal actually moving under their feet." Her problem, then, is essentially one of cultural adaptation: "To live in India and be at peace, one must to a very considerable extent become Indian and adopt Indian attitudes, habits, beliefs, assume if possible an Indian personality. But how is this possible? Should one want to try to become something other than what one is?"

This question, in a sense, is at the center of Jhabvala's fiction. Many of the prominent characters in her novels and stories are either Indians who try to be Westerners, or Westerners who try to be Indians. Jhabvala's tone, when she writes about such people, invariably combines affection with irony—affection, because she knows that it is only human to be attracted to that which one is not, to long for that which one does not possess; irony, because she recognizes how delusory most such attractions are, how fruitless most such longings. Jhabvala is a humorist as well as a humanist: she laughs at man's moral and intellectual imperfections even as she laments his inability to transcend those imperfections. For she does perceive (it is the central perception of her fiction) that the human animal craves transcendence—transcendence of uncertainty, of mortality, of the banality of day-to-day life. Characteristically, Jhabvala sees this craving as both beautiful and foolish. Or, more precisely, she sees it as a beautiful longing that people—not knowing where they can go to find satiation—try to satisfy in foolish ways. In her novels, characters are always seeking, travelling, roaming the world in search of a *locus amenis,* making fools of themselves by reaching out for the impermanent, the inappropriate, the unnatural, the impossible.

The longing for transcendence often takes the form, in Jhabvala's work, of a passionate attachment (and *passion* is a word that she does not hesitate to use) to someone grand, exotic, forbidden, even evil—usually someone of a different race. In her novel *Esmond in India,* for instance, the sheltered young Indian woman Shakuntala is smitten with the haughty, married, extremely European Esmond; in *Heat and Dust* Olivia, the wife of a British officer, falls for the Nawab, a rich, shady local prince; and in *Three Continents* the naïve American girl Harriet adores the mendacious, mysterious Crishi. The narrator of *Heat and Dust* speaks of reaching "a higher plane of consciousness through the powers of sex."

Another form taken by the longing for transcendence is the reverence of movie stars and swamis. (Yes, movie stars and swamis.) Jhabvala recognizes that however different they may seem—the movie star an embodiment of modern Western popular culture at its trashiest, the swami a symbol of ancient Indian religion at its most sublime—they are really very closely related, in that they both represent for the common man a type of transcendence; if swamis (embodying as they do the mysteries of India) hold a special fascination for certain Westerners, so movie stars (embodying the affluence and glamour of the West) hold a special fascination for Indians. Nothing, by the way, is more characteristic of Jhabvala's unique vision and perspective than her recognition of such a bizarre cross-cultural affinity. Movie stars and swamis thus pop up frequently in her work. (One of her films—probably her most unsuccessful, in fact—was *The Guru,* a 1968 character portrait starring Michael York.) Though she pokes fun at both movie stars and swamis, however, she does not make them out to be thoroughgoing fools and rascals; in Jhabvala's fiction, even they have their moments of goodness and wisdom. This is one of the things that make Jhabvala special: she perceives that man is neither basically good nor basically evil, that neither pure materialism nor pure idealism—the struggle between which she often depicts—makes very much sense as a philosophy of life. She knows that we all have in us both good and evil, that we consist of both body and spirit; we are, in short, holy but imperfect creatures, and she writes about us with

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an empathy that stays well clear of bathos and a cynicism that only occasionally descends into bitterness.

Her career can be divided into two periods. Between 1955 and 1971 Jhabvala published six novels. Typical of these early books are *Esmond in India* and *The Householder,* in which Jhabvala is very much a novelist of manners in the tradition of Jane Austen, as well as a natural storyteller *à la* Chekhov. These novels also bring to mind the Indian novelist R. K. Narayan, though her characters are generally more well-to-do than his, and her novels more obviously aimed at a Western audience. Conventional in style and structure, they are strong on character development and social detail; they lie squarely in the realistic tradition of the English novel, and, among twentieth-century English novels, belong in the camp of Evelyn Waugh, Joyce Cary, and Kingsley Amis rather than with such foursquare modernists as Woolf and Conrad.

Take, for instance, her third novel, *Esmond in India* (1958), which is set in the years immediately following India's independence from Britain. The title notwithstanding, the character who is really most prominent in the novel is a young woman named Shakuntala, who has just earned her B.A. and returned home to New Delhi to live with her family. They are a wealthy clan who pride themselves on their Westernization: Shakuntala's father, Har Dayal, a Cambridge-educated government minister, spices his conversation with quotations from Keats, Wordsworth, and Matthew Arnold; her fair-skinned mother, Madhuri, remembers proudly the time a friend told her that in Europe she'd "be taken for Italian or Spanish"; her married older brother, Amrit, a businessman (and a subscriber to *Reader's Digest*), has moved up quickly because his British-owned firm is following a "policy of gradually replacing British executives by Indian ones," and he is "very suitable for this purpose, as he had attended an English university and was also very English in all other respects, except in his complexion"; Shakuntala herself is a fan of Sibelius and Liszt.

Shakuntala considers herself and her father, though, to be different from the other members of her family, especially Amrit. Her brother is a materialist, she complains, whereas she and her father are "idealists" and know that "art and culture are the only important things in life." From the outset, it is clear that Shakuntala's and Har Dayal's culture is superficial and their idealism pragmatic. The truth is that Har Dayal enjoys art and culture less than he enjoys his image of himself as a friend of art and culture.

The novel's other New Delhi family is strikingly different. Its patriarch, Ram Nath —once Har Dayal's friend and mentor and a respected leader of the struggle for Indian independence—has lately gone down in the world as steadily as Har Dayal has gone up. So traditionally Indian is Ram Nath's clan, moreover, that his niece Golub, to the disgust of her despicable English husband, Esmond, cannot even make conversation with his European friends. When this family enters Shakuntala's life it is because Ram Nath wants her to marry his son, Narayan—a brilliant young doctor who has rejected a lucrative practice to care for the rural poor. Unbeknownst to everyone, however, Shakuntala has fallen in love with the superficial Esmond, who represents to her everything Western, and who doesn't care for her in the slightest. Esmond or no Esmond, though, one never has any question about the outcome of Ram Nath's proposal. One knows that Har Dayal, for all his supposed devotion to Ram Nath, will manage to argue slickly against the marriage. And one knows that the idealistic Shakuntala will decide that "my ideals are different than [Narayan's] . . . . I love Art and Beauty and Poetry, how can I give these things up as I shall have to if I go and live with Narayan in a village to do good to the poor?"

It should be said that some of the characters in *Esmond* are less credible than others, their motivations more dubious and their fatuities too strongly exaggerated. It is hard to believe, for instance, that the pathetically meek Golub could ever have worked up the

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nerve to marry Esmond against her family's wishes—especially since she cannot now summon up the same nerve to leave him, though she and her whole family realize that the marriage is a lost cause. Equally difficult to swallow is that a rich, sheltered young Indian woman of the 1950s would have opened her chaste treasure, especially to a married man, as readily as Shakuntala opens hers to Esmond. In any event, one sometimes wishes, while reading *Esmond,* that Jhabvala would let up a bit on the irony, particularly when she is writing about Shakuntala. Quite often the girl is just too foolish to be believed. When her mother asks her, on one occasion, what she is doing, Shakuntala replies, with a child's solemnity, "I am thinking quite hard"; at the end of the novel, when she has a marketplace rendezvous with Esmond, she is absurdly deluded and happy, and Jhabvala, who wants to indicate that life is nowhere near as wonderful as Shakuntala thinks, makes her point with less subtlety than might have been desirable: "She knew now that life was more wonderful, a hundred times more wonderful, than even she had suspected. It was not the moment, nor was she the person, to hide such a sentiment, so she told him, 'Life is wonderful—wonderful!' letting her hand slide from his arm down to his hand which she firmly and fearlessly held as they made their way through the crowd." Though Jhabvala's affectionate attention, then, to the little details of human relations, attitudes, and customs is very charming, she is at times so ironic in this novel that she comes off as downright misanthropic.

The Householder (1960) might be read as something of a companion piece to *Esmond in India.* Instead of concerning herself with a rich young lady who has returned to her father's house after being graduated from college, Jhabvala gives us a middle-class boy named Prem who, as the novel opens, has recently earned a second-class B.A., has undergone an arranged marriage with a girl named Indu, has taken up residence with her in a seedy little flat in Delhi, and has entered upon a low-paying teaching job at a seedy little private college. He is, then, a brand-new "householder"—which is, according to the ancient writings, the third (after child and student) of the four stages of a man's life. The novel is concerned with describing his period of adjustment to this role. For this timid, unambitious, and only moderately intelligent young man is not quite ready for the responsibilities of manhood. Though Indu is with child, he does not find her attractive, and considers her pregnancy a "terrible embarrassment," for "[n]ow everybody would know what he did with her at night in the dark." He tries to behave in a manner befitting a proper Indian husband, but is not very good at it; Indu blithely ignores his orders. At the college, too, his attempts at discipline are ineffectual. Though he spends much of the book, moreover, trying to work up the nerve to ask Mr. Khanna for a raise in salary and his landlord for a lower rent, one knows from the start that when he finally manages to choke out these requests, they will be brushed aside breezily: one knows this as surely as one knows that Shakuntala will never marry Narayan. (One reads Jhabvala novels like *Esmond in India* and *The Householder* not to discover what will happen—one knows pretty much what will happen—but to delight in, among other things, the perceptiveness with which Jhabvala depicts self-important, self-deceiving people like Har Dayal and Mr. Khanna in the act of justifying their ignoble actions.) But one also knows that eventually—and very gradually—things will improve for Prem. Perhaps he will not come to enjoy his new life, but he will grow used to it; it will come to seem less of a burden, and at times even pleasurable.

About Prem: although he is a believable and pitiable character, he is not an extremely likable one. Like Shakuntala, he seems abnormally puerile for a college graduate, buying candy on the way home and eating it quickly so he will not have to share it with Indu. As in the case of Shakuntala, the irony Jhabvala brings to his characterization is sometimes excessive; on occasion he is so

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passive and ineffectual that one feels as if one is being invited not to sympathize with him but to feel superior to him. This is true not only of Prem, to be sure, but of many of the characters in the book, whose banality is of grotesque dimensions. Prem's fellow teachers, for example, speak almost entirely in clichés. Since they are minor characters, however, this is not a crucial failing, and the results are admittedly very funny; the inane pretentiousness displayed at Mr. Khanna's tea party, for example, is reminiscent of Dickens:

> "As I was saying," said Mr. Khanna; he took up his position in the centre again and replaced his thumb in his armpit. "It is very pleasant to have the ladies with us. Very agreeable." The ladies all stared straight in front of them, without any change of expression. Only Mrs. Khanna said, "I think the tea-water is nearly boiling."
>
> Mr. Chaddha said, "The society of ladies is said to have a very softening effect." He was wearing a cream-coloured silk suit which seemed to have been washed quite a number of times, and he sat with his arms and his little bird legs crossed in an attitude of ease suitable to a tea-party.
>
> "It is not for nothing," suggested Mr. Khanna, "that they are known as the gentle sex." Led by Mr. Chaddha, the gentlemen politely laughed. "It is good sometimes to break off in the midst of toil," Mr. Khanna continued, "and enjoy an hour's leisure and ease in their charming company."
>
> "As our heroes of old," said Mr. Chaddha, "withdrew for respite from their battles to have their wounds dressed and their brows soothed by the hands of their consorts." He seemed pleased by this remark; he cleared his throat and crossed his legs the other way. The other teachers looked at the Principal, and when they saw him smile in appreciation, they too smiled in appreciation.

Outlandish as they are, furthermore, the teachers are a lot easier to take than Hans Loewe, a German boy who befriends Prem. Hans has come to India from "materialistic" Europe because he thinks this is "the country where people renounce the flesh and think only of the Spirit!" Nothing, apparently, can make him see things any differently. (He is as obtuse about the real nature of India as Shakuntala is about Esmond's lack of affection toward her.) He says to Prem,

> "Only think—in this country where everything is beautiful, the sunset and the fruit and the women, here you call it all Illusion! How do you say—Maya?"
>
> Prem said, "Yes, Maya," though he was not quite sure.

"How I love your India!" Hans tells Prem, but *his* India is not at all the same as Prem's; when Prem begins to speak of India's independence and its economic progress, Hans seems not even to hear him: "Everything is so spiritual—we can wash off our dirty materialism when we come here to your India!" At first these speeches are somewhat amusing, and this Westerner's admiration of India's supposed spiritual *richesse* is certainly deliciously ironic in light of post-revolutionary India's desperate longing for a Western-style material affluence. But though Hans appears several times in the book, Jhabvala never develops him any further than this; he remains incredibly obtuse and deaf to Prem's practical-minded conversation. To Hans, indeed, Prem is little more than a symbol of India. Of course, Jhabvala finds Hans ridiculous for taking this simplistic, condescending attitude. But Hans is such a blatant, uncomplicated stereotype of the European in India that it could be argued that Jhabvala herself, in creating such a character, is as guilty of gross simplification and condescension as he is.

The most peculiar episode of *The Householder* is one in which Prem spends part of an evening with a swami and his followers. Nobody says anything profound during this encounter, but the mere fact that the swami and his followers speak—even in the vaguest terms—of God and of the heart's longings and of "what is valuable in the world and

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what is not" makes the experience overwhelming for Prem; the "unaccustomed purity" of the meeting goes to his head, and causes him to laugh and feel drunk and experience, like Shakuntala at the marketplace, a brief sense of transcendence:

> He thought yes, this is how one must live—with love and laughter and song and thoughts of God. All his former worries about his rent, his rise in salary, his lack of authority as teacher and husband, were nothing but a thin scum floating on top of a deep well of happiness and satisfaction. Nothing, he thought, would ever trouble him again. From now on he would live in contemplation only of spiritual things. Indu would be like a sister to him—he would love her as a sister and both would sit at the feet of the swami and think of God and indulge in happy, innocent play.

But of course the pressing circumstances of daily life make Prem's determination to live such an existence fade quickly away. Though this episode is well done, Prem seems in it to be rather out of character; one feels as if he has been led to the swami less by the longings of his soul than by Jhabvala's desire to work a swami into the novel, and to have somebody speak of transcendent things.

The strength of *The Householder*—and a great strength it is—is that Jhabvala manages to make an unremarkable phase of an unremarkable life very touching and compelling. Like many contemporary English novelists—the late Barbara Pym comes to mind—she seems deliberately, in these early novels, to cultivate a certain smallness; in size, style, setting, scope, intentions, ideas, and range of feeling, *The Householder* is a modest book. Jhabvala concerns herself with a protagonist who we know from the start will not change dramatically, will not do anything admirable, will never amount to much. Jhabvala's restraint is remarkable, as is her understanding of character. She captures with great skill Prem's feelings of fear, uncertainty, deprivation, and hopelessness. (In fact, she makes the life of these middle-class Indians seem so barren and banal—which I don't doubt for a moment it is—that one can only be grateful she doesn't take on the life of the abject poor.) She has extra-literary goals, of course: here—as throughout her fiction—she is out to destroy the sentimental views that Western readers may have of India. Furthermore, her attention to homely details seems to be designed, in part anyway, to ridicule the grandiose pretensions of characters like Mr. Khanna. Whatever the case may be, *The Householder* is wonderfully attentive to the details of Indian life—the jarring of pickle, the making of poori and chapati, the conversations about the desirability of government jobs, the entreaties of beggars ("You are my mother and my father"). As for the novel's prose, it is even more lucid and luminous than that of *Esmond in India.* Compared to that novel, *The Householder* is shorter, simpler, more focused, more austere in its manner, and more concerned with conveying a sense of everyday Indian life; in the latter regard, in fact, it is, despite its drawbacks, a veritable *tour de force.*

Aside from the swami, the one thing in Prem's life that seems to transcend everyday reality is the cinema. Jhabvala's novels poke merciless fun at the film world—at the shoddiness of most of its products, at the large role it plays in most Indians' lives (and imaginations), and at the preoccupation of many Indians with the romances and scandals described in movie magazines. (In *The Householder* a paper-man passes by Prem's mother's train, shouting, *"Film-Fun, Film-Fare, Film-Frolic!"*) It seems ironic, then, that Jhabvala has herself made such a large contribution to Indian film. The first motion picture on which she collaborated with Merchant and Ivory was a charming black-and-white adaptation of *The Householder* (1963), starring Shashi Kapoor as Prem. Though the film has the same story, and much the same grim, claustrophobic atmosphere, as the book, there are a few notable differences: several episodes are shuffled around; Prem is not quite as spineless as in the book, and is rather more talkative; and

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Hans from Germany—who probably should have been an American in the first place—is transformed into Ernest from Philadelphia.

The film of *The Householder* was succeeded by two good films about India, the West, and the decline of culture. *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) concerns a small travelling company of English Shakespearean actors who have spent years in India but who, thanks to the growing popularity of movies, have had increasing trouble finding employment, and are thus beginning to feel as if there's nothing left for them in India. "We should've gone home in '47 when they all went," complains the company's lead actor, Mr. Buckingham. But his wife (and leading lady) observes that "We always used to think *this* was our home." Indeed, the Buckinghams' teenage daughter, Lizzie, has never even been to England. Nor, in spite of her family's wishes, does she want to go there to be educated—especially after she meets, falls in love with, and begins an affair with a rich, handsome young man named Sanju (Shashi Kapoor). The affair is doomed from the start, of course. For one thing, Sanju's values and way of life contrast sharply with those of the Buckingham family; for another, Sanju already has a woman in his life, the glamorous film star Manjula, who is as wily and superficial as Lizzie is sincere and sensitive. *Shakespeare Wallah* may be the best of Jhabvala's early films: it is a gentle comedy with the audacity (and the good sense) to imply that certain products of a foreign culture—that is, Shakespeare's plays—might be better for Indians than certain products (i.e., tacky films) of their own culture.

After *Shakespeare Wallah* came *Bombay Talkie* (1970), yet another Jhabvala movie whose primary concern is to deplore the influence of movies. The heroine is Lucia Lane (Jennifer Kendal), a restless, superficial, several-times-married hack writer from England who has come to India hoping to change her luck. On a Bombay soundstage—where a musical number featuring a giant typewriter is being filmed—she meets two men who are attracted to her. One of them is a good-hearted bachelor screenwriter named Harry; the other is the dashing movie actor Vikram (Shashi Kapoor again), who is as superficial as she is. Though Vikram is married, Lucia has an affair with him; so insensitive is she that even when his meek little Indian wife walks in on the two of them in the couple's bedroom, it doesn't occur to Lucia to feel guilty or uncomfortable. Vikram is one of many men in Jhabvala's work (Esmond is another) who blithely cheat on their Indian wives with Western women; to these husbands, their wives represent tradition and permanence, whereas Western women—who need not be taken seriously anyway, because they are prostitutes by nature—represent adventure, sophistication, modernity. Of course, no Jhabvala story about restless Westerners in India would be complete without a swami, and so Lucia spends some time in an ashram, trying (without much success) to adapt herself—and her very healthy sex drive—to a disciple's ascetic life. *Bombay Talkie* is a good movie; if it is less satisfying than *Shakespeare Wallah,* it's because the principal characters are less sympathetic, the theme more familiar (with only a few changes, the story might have been set in Rome or London), and certain developments (notably, the stabbing at the end) downright corny.

Beginning with *Travelers* (1973), Jhabvala's novels represent quite a different sort of accomplishment from their predecessors. If the early novels tend to depict India from Indian points of view, in these later novels the subcontinent is more usually seen through the eyes of Westerners. In these books the country seems more exotic, somewhat less a geographical entity, a way of life, and somewhat more a state of mind; her view of the country, that is to say, is less down-to-earth, more cosmic—more symbolic. Whereas in the early novels the story is paramount, and narrative coherence a priority, the later novels are more fragmented; Jhabvala is less interested, in these books, in telling a story than in painting a single broad canvas; she seeks to give us India, it seems, not by offering us a series of discrete

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connected images but by depicting one image, as it were, from a multiplicity of angles. These later Jhabvala novels are more sensual, experimental, modern; though the later Jhabvala, like her earlier incarnation, has affinities to Waugh and Cary, say, she is closer than the early Jhabvala to the camp of Virginia Woolf, Conrad, Lawrence, and Joyce.

Travelers reads like a sort of trial run for the new Jhabvala. In it she moves back and forth between the points of view of four characters whose paths cross in India. Raymond, a pleasant young Englishman, is a Cambridge graduate who lives in New Delhi and is in love with Gopi, a college student; Asha is a rich middle-aged woman who also becomes smitten with Gopi, and Lee is a young Englishwoman who has come to India "to lose herself in order . . . to find herself," and who spends time in an ashram as a swami's disciple and lover. The stories of these characters' lives, as they develop over a period of several months, are told in brief chapters, many of them no longer than a page or two, some of them in epistolary form; they carry flat, descriptive titles such as "Raymond and Gopi Meet Lee," "Lee Writes to Asha," and "Raymond Arrives in the Ashram."

There is much talk about India and what it means, and in this connection many characters and settings take on symbolic dimensions. Raymond grows very fond of Indian music because it has become for him "a distillation of everything he loved in Gopi and everything he loved in India. These two were now inextricable." Lee notes that her friend Margaret looks down on Miss Charlotte, an elderly English missionary, because

> she can't sympathize with her *attitude,* which she says is old-fashioned and patronizing. She says people just don't come any more to India to do good, those days are over. What they come for now is—well, to do good to themselves, to learn, to *take* from India. That's what Margaret's here for. Above all she wants to be pure—to have a pure heart untainted by modern materialism. Margaret hates modern materialism. Of course, so do I; that's why we're both here.

It is this hatred of "modern materialism" that leads Lee to the swami, who plans to develop his following into the Universal Society for Spiritual Regeneration in the Modern World, "a worldwide religion uniting men of all creeds and all colors into one family and so bringing peace and harmony into the world." It is Lee's naïve faith in the swami that provides Jhabvala with her biggest opportunities, in this novel, for irony. "[H]e's so *phenomenal,*" Lee exults, "I mean it's so fantastic the way his mind is always alert . . . . [H]e has this power of knowing people before he's actually physically met them." Contrasted with the swami and his thriving ashram are Miss Charlotte and her mission—an institution that has actually done a great deal of good, but which is closed by the Indian government because "philanthropy is a form of charity that the government of India, indeed I may say the people of India, can no longer allow themselves to accept."

The travellers of this novel are in search not only of a number of great abstractions—truth, enlightenment, spiritual regeneration—but of one thing that is very concrete: family. If Lee is so easily taken in by the swami, it is because he has made it possible, at his ashram, for her to be part of something that resembles a family; likewise, Gopi becomes attached to an old swami-like woman named Banubai of whom he says, "She is my mother. She is everyone's mother." Appropriately, the novel ends with two of its protagonists making travelling plans: Raymond arranges to return to his only real family, his mother in England; Lee—who has left the ashram—decides to return to it, because it is the only real home she has.

Travelers is an odd book. The writing is crisp and vivid throughout, and some of the episodes are wittily done. At a high-toned dinner, for instance, the English host and an Indian minister get into a friendly argument over whether there is a "special relationship" between England and India; it's an absurd

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argument, because the Indian—who denies the existence of such a relationship—sounds as English as the Englishman. But after the smoothness, concision, and focus of *Esmond in India* and (even more so) *The Householder, Travelers* seems choppy, sprawling, meandering. Yes, the directionlessness of its characters and plot is part of the point; this is a book about four confused people meandering through life—and, to an extent, across the landscape of India—in search of something. Such a book can certainly work, but more than anything else it needs particularly appealing and sympathetic characters in order to do so; and the fact is that the characters in *Travelers* simply are not all that engaging. Even at the end of the book, one does not feel as if one knows them very well or cares strongly about any of them. Interestingly, the words of praise quoted on the back cover of the Fireside paperback edition point directly to the book's cardinal weakness. The quotation from *The New York Times Book Review* describes *Travelers* as a "distinguished psychological survey"; Ved Mehta observes that the "central character in *Travelers* . . . is India, which for [Jhabvala] is not so much a country as an experience, after which no one is ever the same." Both Mehta and the *Times* critic are correct. But to refer to the novel as a "psychological survey" is to suggest—with justification, I think—that Jhabvala's characters seem more like case studies of personality types than they do like distinctive individuals; and to say that India is the novel's central character is plainly to admit that the human characters in the book are overwhelmed by the setting.

Jhabvala's most celebrated work of fiction, *Heat and Dust* (1975), has several affinities with *Travelers,* the most important being that it, too, is concerned with Anglo-Indian relations and cross-cultural romances; as with the earlier novel, moreover, it might be said of *Heat and Dust* that one of its central characters is India itself. Here, too, Jhabvala presents us with more than one protagonist—with a pair of them, in fact—but, unlike the foursome in *Travelers,* they never meet each other. They are, as it happens, two women who are divided from each other by time, but who belong to the same family and have a great deal in common. One of them, Olivia—whose story is set in 1923, in the Indian town of Satipur and its environs—is the bored young wife of Douglas Rivers, a British officer; she loves him, yet gradually finds herself becoming fascinated by the Nawab, a charming but dissolute (and married) prince whose palace is in the nearby town of Khatm and whose income appears to derive largely from the petty crimes of various sordid hirelings. The attraction is mutual, and in the end Olivia runs off with the Nawab, lives out her days in his house in the remote town of X, and is never seen again. The other protagonist is a young lady—Douglas's granddaughter by his second wife—who, fifty years later, having read through a trove of Olivia's old letters, journeys to India in an attempt to understand this woman whose story is now a skeleton in the family closet. The novel alternates between a straightforward recounting of Olivia's story—as revealed, we are to understand, by the letters—and the granddaughter's successive entries in the journal she keeps of her several months' visit to Satipur, during which time she has her own affair with an Indian.

As is to be expected in a Jhabvala novel, however, the narrator's reasons for coming to India are not entirely related to Olivia. She explains that "many of us are tired of the materialism of the West, and even if we have no particular attraction towards the spiritual message of the East, we come here in the hope of finding a simpler and more natural way of life." Inder Lal, her lover, considers this attitude a mockery; he is as acutely and painfully aware of his material poverty, as compared with the lot of the typical European, as she is aware of what she considers her spiritual poverty, *vis-à-vis* the average Indian: "He says, why should people who have everything—motor cars, refrigerators—come here to such a place where there is nothing?"

Esmond in India and *The Householder* have

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strong story lines that develop clearly and fluently, and characters that blossom rapidly into life; *Heat and Dust* is a more elliptical work, its characters more enigmatic, their motives less readily apprehended. Its feel—the tone peculiarly dry, the episodes often crabbed and unyielding, the chronological leaps disorienting, even jerky—is similar to that of *Travelers,* but it is far more sure-footed, almost as if *Travelers* were the rough draft and *Heat and Dust* the finished work; there is a symbolic force to the latter book that *Travelers* doesn't quite achieve. If in *Travelers* the landscape of India seems to dwarf the characters, in *Heat and Dust* the characters partake of the country's vastness; the simple, elliptical stories of Olivia and the narrator have an archetypal, a legendary, quality that the muddled, prosaic case histories in *Travelers* don't.

The stories of Olivia and the narrator are at once similar and different; in this they reflect the similarities and differences between the British India of Olivia's day and the independent India that the narrator visits—connections which Jhabvala draws with a fine subtlety and elegance. Of course it is the differences—especially those between the nature of Anglo-Indian relations in 1923 and in the 1970s—that are most dramatically apparent. The house in which Olivia and Douglas lived now contains Indian government offices; there is a chumminess now between Englishmen and Indians that would have been rare in Olivia's time. But in all essential things, the India that the narrator becomes familiar with is the same India that Olivia knew. The heat and dust, for instance, persist. India is the same intolerably hot and dry land that it was half a century ago—or, for that matter, half a millennium ago. India is still a land that "always changes people." Though, in comparison to Jhabvala's other novels, it seems to have received somewhat more than its share of critical attention and praise, *Heat and Dust* most assuredly represents a high point of Jhabvala's art.

In the same year that this most substantial novel (which became a film in 1982) was published, there appeared a surprisingly slight Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala movie entitled *The Autobiography of a Princess.* It is of interest, though, for its thematic similarity to *Heat and Dust.* Far from the sweeping spectacle that the title might lead one to expect, this film takes place in a modest London house where, one afternoon, a middle-aged Indian princess (Madhur Jaffrey) has an elderly English bachelor (James Mason) to tea. This is, one gathers, an annual ritual; her guest—who was once right-hand man to her late father, a maharajah—has come to celebrate with her the birthday of her father by watching home movies and sharing memories. During most of the film, the princess talks incessantly of Papa, whom she remembers as a great and cultured man, but who—one gradually realizes—was actually very much like the Nawab in *Heat and Dust*: a tyrant, a criminal, and an adulterer, who romanced a film star and lost his throne as the result of a scandalous affair with a lower-class Englishwoman. It is not till the last minutes of the film that the guest speaks at length of his relationship with the maharajah, which sounds exactly like that between the Nawab and his homosexual English friend Harry (who, in turn, rather reminds one, with his endless letters home to mother and his quiet worship of his Adored One, of Raymond in *Travelers*). So ends the film.

It is a baffling piece of work: barely an hour long, set in one room in "real time," it has no plot, no action, no dramatic conflict, and consists mostly of one rambling, interminable speech. As for the home-movie-within-a-movie, it is a bizarre compilation containing, among other things, a *60 Minutes*-style interview with disenfranchised Indian nobles, grainy scenes of elephants on parade, and truly repulsive footage showing the beheading of goats. Its only apparent points are that daughters often have highly selective memories of their fathers, and that for many high-born Indians who now live in reduced circumstances, British India is a glorious memory and independent India a nightmare. At best, the film is an *outré* footnote to *Heat and Dust*—a drastically less

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effective variation, that is, on the theme of family memories of British India.

The novel that directly preceded Jhabvala's new novel is of interest for several reasons. For one thing, it is the first of her novels written during her residency in New York. For another, it has many similarities to *Three Continents*. Interestingly, *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983) is set mostly in America—in Manhattan, to be specific—and takes place over several decades of the mid-twentieth century. At its center are three generations of a well-heeled West Side family: Louise (whose husband Bruno dies young), her businesswoman daughter Marianne (who calls herself Marietta), and the grandchildren, the world-travelling real-estate entrepreneur Mark and the otiose, idealistic homebody Natasha. The family is surprisingly close-knit—more like an Indian family, one cannot help but think, than a typical New York family; Marietta's fulfillment, we are told, lies in Mark, and for the utterly friendless Natasha, her grandmother, mother, and brother are "her home, her life, everything she knew and cherished." Yet family attachments are not enough to sustain and satisfy them. All four—aside from Natasha, who never even has a boyfriend—share a history of unorthodox, intense, and impermanent romantic entanglements, as well as a vague but persistent dedication to spiritual realization. They also share a fascination with a man named Leo Kellerman, whom Louise first meets in the 1930s, recognizes as "a yet undefined genius," and remains enthralled by for the next several decades. Leo is a swami in everything but name: he gives lectures and workshops, has a group of followers, and seeks to establish an Academy of Potential Development—a goal that Louise's family, of which he becomes something of an associate member, helps him to achieve.

Here, as in *Heat and Dust,* Jhabvala eschews a straightforward chronological structure. Instead, she leaps back and forth through the history of Louise's family, favoring us now with an episode set in the 1970s, now with one set in the 1940s. This practice of skipping around in time has a striking effect: it makes the family's life seem like a *fait accompli* rather than like something that mysteriously unfolds from moment to moment and can be changed by the characters' actions. This, in turn, makes the characters' incessant spiritual searching seem particularly pathetic and useless: we already know, after all, that they will never find transcendence. (Alas, Jhabvala doesn't get Americans quite right. She has them speak of "laundrettes" instead of "laundromats," of "blocks" instead of apartment houses; she has them drink too much tea and use British colloquialisms.)

This being a Jhabvala novel, there must be at least one Indian in the cast. That quota is filled in part by Ahmed, a musician whose recital at a converted New York porno theater Marietta attends. She is attracted not so much to Ahmed, she insists, as to "his sarod [a sort of Indian lute], his music; and not even that but the world it opened—the world beyond worlds—the promise of peace and fulfilment that was like a hand laid on her restless heart." Marietta hires Ahmed to give her sarod lessons, and she thereafter invites him (as Raymond does Gopi in *Travelers*) to move in with her. He does so, only to return eventually to India, which Marietta thereafter visits yearly, often passing through ashrams in the course of her travels; on one of her trips she forms an intense friendship with a woman musician named Sujata who represents her "most meaningful encounter there, or her deepest immersion and enchantment." (Like Asha, by the way, Sujata is in love with a boy who is young enough to be her son; she asks Marietta "if it was so wrong to have these feelings, then why were they sent?") Mark, for his part, devotes his life to a series of homosexual affairs. In a conflict over a mutual lover named Kent, an older man stops just short of stabbing Mark with a carving knife; Mark handles the crisis well, but the object of their affections breaks down in tears. Jhabvala explains:

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> He was still very young, only at the beginning of his career, and knew nothing of what could sometimes happen among people with very strong feelings.
>
> About these feelings: Leo had once likened them to the voices of the great *castrati,* in which a man's vigour was made to give body to a woman's nervous delicacy. Unhuman voices, Leo called them; unnatural hybrids. "All the same," Mark had replied, "no one ever said they weren't beautiful."

This is what *In Search of Love and Beauty* is about: the way that unnatural, strong, and beautiful longings can lead people into foolish acts and harmless liaisons. For the truth about Louise, Marietta, and Mark seems to be that, though they cherish the family bond, each of them still hopes for some more transcendent form of human connection than that which they have. Leo, Ahmed, Kent are all ways of trying to build a new kind of family, a more nearly perfect union of souls. But one never really understands why one generation after another of this family should be so restless, so dedicated to the intercontinental search for "inner fulfillment," so devoted to the Leo Kellermans and Ahmeds of the world. Indeed, though one wants very much to believe in these extremely interesting people, one doesn't.

Jhabvala's new novel, *Three Continents,* is in many respects very similar to *In Search of Love and Beauty.* For one thing, the new novel—which in style and structure is Jhabvala's most conventional in over a decade—centers upon three generations of an affluent American family. The narrator is a young woman named Harriet Wishwell, who begins with a capsule family history: she and her twin brother, Michael, are the product of a broken marriage between a spoiled father, Manton, who has spent his life drawing on a trust fund, and a mother, Lindsay, who lives on the family ranch with a woman named Jean; since neither parent has very strong parental instincts, both Harriet and her brother were brought up largely by their paternal grandparents, a diplomat and his wife, in a number of Asian capitals. This upbringing bred in the children a "restlessness, or dissatisfaction with what was supposed to be our heritage—that is, with America." Neither lasted in college more than a year; both always "wanted something other—better—than we had. Of course people would say that what we had was pretty good, and from a materialistic point of view that would be true."

But, needless to say, theirs is an idealistic rather than a materialistic point of view. And it is not until their twentieth year—when Michael shows up at Lindsay's ranch house, fresh from yet another restless swing through Asia, with a swami and several disciples in tow—that things start looking up for them, idealistically speaking. The Rawul (for so the swami calls himself) is "as idealistic as Michael," the founder of something he calls the Fourth World movement. He has, as Harriet puts it, "this simple but forceful idea of constituting himself the savior of world civilization." In the new world—the Fourth World—"all that was best in the other three would come to fruition." Sharing this goal with him are the Rani, his consort, and Crishi, whom Harriet takes to be their adopted son. Michael himself declares, "This is it, Harriet. *Om,* the real thing." It is, in other words, what the two of them have been seeking all their lives. Harriet explains:

> While our parents were having marital squabbles and adulterous love affairs and our grandparents were giving diplomatic cocktail parties, [Michael] and I were struggling with the concepts of Maya and Nirvana, and how to transcend our own egos. Anything smaller than that, anything on a lower plane, disgusted us. I was used to following Michael's lead, so when he said that the Rawul and Rani and Crishi operated on the highest level possible, I didn't contradict him, although it seemed to me at that time that they were very worldly people.

This impression would seem to be confirmed by the reaction of Manton's girlfriend, Barbara, the daughter of a famous

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movie actress: the atmosphere around the Rawul, she says, reminds her of the atmosphere around her mother. (Like previous swamis in Jhabvala's work, in short, the Rawul seems to be to idealism what movie stars are to materialism.)

Before long, however, Harriet has become not only the Rawul's disciple but Crishi's wife. It is plain to the reader—though not at all to Harriet—that Crishi's main reason for marrying her is his desire to control the ranch, which the twins will inherit on their twenty-first birthday, and which Michael wants to donate to the movement. And little by little the Rawul's people do take control of the ranch. The gradually increasing sense of domination, as communicated by Jhabvala between the lines of Harriet's placid narrative, is chillingly reminiscent of *Animal Farm*; these sections of the book represent an impressive accomplishment in *mise en scène.* But the characterizations give one pause. For why in heaven's name does almost nobody at the ranch notice how chilling these developments are? What is it about Harriet, Michael, and Lindsay that causes them to succumb so readily to the Rawul's empty rhetoric? Why is the only voice of common-sense reality that of Jean, who pleads with Harriet: "How could you allow these people—these strangers—to take over your house? Our house? It's like a nightmare." How is it that Harriet is able to recognize momentarily the truth of Jean's remark, only to drift back into mindless passivity? In short, why has Jhabvala chosen to create a family all of whose members are capable of being swallowed up by a cult in record time? Surely we are meant to understand that the Wishwells have been deprived of a strong sense of family and, like the clan at the center of *In Search of Love and Beauty,* yearn for a feeling of spiritual transcendence and for something larger than themselves to belong to; in a way, obviously, we are meant to see them as representative of the contemporary decay of the Western family and of family values. But the Wishwells are so grotesque a family that it is impossible to see them as representative of anything in the real world. Though it would be difficult enough to believe in any of them in isolation, to expect a reader to accept them all as members of a single family seems rather too much to ask.

And of all of them, the hardest to believe in is Harriet. She reminds one less of any real individual than of Alice Mellings, the obtuse protagonist of Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist,* who, desperate for a family of her own, falls for a third-rate terrorist group even more readily than Harriet falls for Crishi and the Rawul's cult. In Harriet, Jhabvala has created a textbook example of an unreliable narrator. Things are quite clearly not the way Harriet would have us think they are—or, indeed, the way she herself perceives them to be. Take her marriage, for instance. When the Rawul and his cohorts relocate to London, Harriet and Michael go with them; there Harriet meets Rupert, an art gallery owner who turns out to be the Rani's husband. Though Harriet doesn't realize it at all, the circumstances strongly suggest that the Rani married Rupert for his money, his government connections (which she used to straighten out her visa problems), and his family's seventeenth-century house (which the Rani liquidated soon after the marriage). Just as the Rani has used Rupert, so it is clear that Crishi, in marrying Harriet, is out to use her; indeed, as the party moves (in the book's second section) from America to London, and then (in section three) from London to India, everyone seems to await her twenty-first birthday as if it were the coming of the Messiah.

What's more, Harriet never faces squarely the facts about the Rawul's cash flow: like the Nawab's wealth in *Heat and Dust,* the movement's money appears to derive largely from crime. And Harriet knows this. She sees Crishi and Michael beat people up; she sees the Rawul's followers being trained in the use of weapons; she hears stories about Crishi's criminal past; and she speaks in passing of the arrest of some of the Rawul's followers "at certain borders," with each arrest representing "a considerable financial

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setback with the impounding of whatever it was that was being carried from one place to another." But she only mentions these things *en passant*. What *is* it that is being carried from one place to another? If Harriet knows, it's apparently not important enough to her to deserve mention. She seems incapable of adding it all up—the violence, the guns, the smuggling—and seeing the Rawul's movement for the sleazy enterprise that it really is. Why doesn't it occur to her to address the movement's blatant criminality as a moral issue? Why can't she see the utter divergence between the brutal reality of the movement and her image of it as a force for peace and love and brotherhood? The answer is, simply, that though her mother refers to her and Michael as the family "intellectuals," actual ratiocination is alien to her; it is not in her nature to *think* about her experiences. Although she considers herself a devotee of the movement, her understanding of it never progresses beyond the public-relations level; she fails to notice that the "ideas" in the Rawul's "program" are nothing but fuzzy platitudes.

To write a long novel—and this is one of Jhabvala's longest—in the voice of such a character seems an inordinately challenging task, and that Jhabvala does it as well as she does is a tribute to her gifts. This is a very smoothly written book—stately, lucid, and balanced. But the character of Harriet weakens it enormously. Like Shakuntala, Harriet is a heroine created expressly to be looked down upon; her unmitigated stupidity, and Jhabvala's incessant irony, eventually become too much to take. What's more, for all her sarcasm about people who are drawn to swamis, *Three Continents* seems to me to demonstrate—as if any more demonstration were necessary—that Jhabvala herself is in the grip of an inordinate fascination with them. To read the first few pages of this novel, with its multi-generational swami madness, is to get the mistaken impression that it is set somewhere around 1970, at the height of many Americans' love affair with gurus, mystics, and Ravi Shankar. So narrowly limited is Jhabvala here by her longtime theme of Indians who try to be Westerners and Westerners who try to be Indians that *Three Continents* comes off as stale and anachronistic, a recycling of dated and familiar motifs. It is encouraging, to be sure, that here, as in her preceding novel, Jhabvala's principal characters are Americans; both novels suggest that she is determined to bring new settings and concerns into her work, to move beyond her usual material. But just as her American protagonists, in these most recent novels, are pulled, as if by some force beyond themselves, to India, so for Jhabvala herself India remains unwaveringly the final destination, the figure in the carpet. In a very real sense, India has made Jhabvala; let us hope now that her preoccupation with the subcontinent is not her undoing as well.

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Frank Stella returns to the Modern

by Roger Kimball

Imagine an exemplary career for a contemporary American painter. Such a career would be full to brimming with both commercial and critical success, and would somehow manage to retain the sheen of avant-garde daring while firmly establishing itself as a popular conventional taste. The prelude to such a career would have to be a reasonably tony education: high school at Phillips Academy, Andover, say, followed by college at Princeton, where the young artist's talent would be recognized and encouraged, and where he would begin to make important connections in the art world. Because an exemplary artistic career must include *some* period of struggle, it would involve a year or so of obscurity in New York; but because no exemplary career is unprecocious, it would also involve stunning early successes: an exhibition of several works in the important "Sixteen Americans" show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959, for example, when the artist was only twenty-three, followed by a one-man show at the Leo Castelli Gallery a few months later.

Of course, an exemplary career requires more than a brilliant beginning, and the succeeding years would therefore have to bring innumerable honors and accolades. The artist's style would undergo dramatic shifts, eliciting enthusiastic praise and stern censure from critics, and ever larger checks from museums and collectors. In 1970, when the artist was but thirty-three, the Museum of Modern Art would see fit to devote a major retrospective exhibition to his work, making him the youngest artist to be so honored. Then there would be years of consolidation. Galleries and museums and collectors from every corner of the civilized world would clamor for his art; learned essays and articles on his work would proliferate, bolstering its academic reputation. There would be further dramatic changes of style. These too would be duly analyzed and commented on, and would be followed by more honors and accolades, culminating in 1983 when the artist would become the youngest person—and the first abstract artist—appointed to deliver the prestigious Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard University, lectures given in previous years by such eminences as T. S. Eliot, Igor Stravinsky, Northrop Frye, and Lionel Trilling. When published in 1986, the artist's Norton lectures would garner enormous attention for their energy and bravura, preparing the ground for a second major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art the following year.

It is no secret that the protagonist of this idyll is none other than the New York artist Frank Stella. And quite apart from the details of the sketch, so perfectly does Stella conform to the contemporary ideal of artistic success that one is tempted to say that if he did not exist the art world would have had to invent him. Nevertheless, there comes a time in even the most celebrated artist's career when one must ask whether

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the accomplishment has really kept pace with the reputation. For after the inexorable public-relations machinery of museums, galleries, and journalism has moved on to celebrate a different artist, we shall still be left with Stella's work. How well does it stand up? Does it elicit memorable aesthetic emotion as well as public praise? Is it, as we have been assured time and again, an artistic achievement of the first order?

The exhibition of Stella's later work that opened in mid-October at the Museum of Modern Art provides an apt occasion to ponder such questions.[1] Like the 1970 Stella retrospective, the current exhibition was organized by William Rubin, Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Modern and one of Stella's earliest admirers. Because Stella's pieces tend to be quite large, the exhibition is limited to thirty-eight works, all dating from 1970 and after. The absence of any examples of his early paintings is to be regretted, not least because the course of the artist's development from the late Sixties is best understood as a reaction against the stringent aesthetic of his early, Minimalist paintings. But Mr. Rubin has made a judicious and representative selection of works from 1970 to the present, and the exhibition affords a reliable overview of Stella's oeuvre and artistic concerns from that period.

The story of Stella's artistic development is the story of ever-increasing visual complexity. When he burst upon the art world at the end of 1959, it was with a series of large rectangular canvases painted entirely in a dull black enamel. The surface of each painting consisted of a simple geometric pattern —uniform chevrons, for example, or interlocking rectangles—that was formed by thin, slightly wavering lines of unpainted canvas. There was no color, no contrast of forms or materials, no illusionistic depth or drawing. As Stella put it in an often-quoted interview from 1964, in those paintings "what you see is what you see."

Appearing at a moment when painting was still dominated by the extravagant outpourings of Abstract Expressionism, Stella's Black Paintings created a sensation. In retrospect, they can be seen to have inaugurated the Minimalist movement in art. Stella's attempt to pare down painting, to purge it of extraneous gesture, warmth, and emotion made his work appear almost as a species of anti-painting, an inversion of everything that painting stood for and expressed. Nevertheless, the Black Paintings exercised a strange fascination on many observers. Above all, they impressed certain viewers with their utter seriousness. In a letter of recommendation Alfred H. Barr wrote for Stella in 1960, he confessed that the paintings "baffled" him but added that he was "deeply impressed by their conviction." It is easy to appreciate both reactions. The Black Paintings are indeed baffling. Even today, they seem possessed of a visual leanness that borders on the anorexic. They give one very little to warm to, to respond to, very little to *like*. On the other hand, they are also possessed of a compelling visual tautness and concentration that, whatever other merits they may claim, Stella's succeeding work has never recaptured.

After the Black Paintings, Stella's art mutated quickly. He experimented with copper and aluminum paint, producing a number of paintings that look like metallic complications of the Black Paintings. By the middle Sixties he was using a wide palette, which included iridescent Day-Glo colors, and irregularly shaped canvases: notched

1 "Frank Stella: Works From 1970 to 1987" is on view at the Museum of Modern Art through January 5, 1988. The exhibition then travels to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in February and the Musée National d'Art Moderne (Centre Georges Pompidou) in May before continuing its American tour next fall at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (October 16 through December 31, 1988), the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (February 11 through April 23, 1989), and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (June 4 through August 13). The accompanying catalogue by William Rubin, *Frank Stella 1970-1987*, is published by the Museum of Modern Art (172 pages, $45).

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rectangles and V's, irregular polygons, and shapes that were determined by the methodical use of a protractor. In the mid-Seventies, Stella began making the huge, brightly colored reliefs from aluminum, fiberglass, and other materials that have become so familiar in recent years and whose history the current exhibition details. His work, once the *ne plus ultra* of unadorned flatness, extended further and further from the picture plane as metallic curves, plates, cones, and cylinders swarmed outward from an increasingly obscured support. The contrast between these recent creations and the stolid flatness of the Black Paintings could not be more striking.

Despite the chaotic appearance of some of his more recent work, Stella has always approached painting analytically. At least since the Black Paintings, he has worked in series, exploring variations of a single theme or idea in a number of related works. The reproductions of preliminary drawings and maquettes that Mr. Rubin includes in the catalogue suggest how methodically Stella approaches his art. The earliest works in the current exhibition are from the Polish Village series, a group of some one hundred and thirty reliefs designed in the early Seventies. Stella has said that the titles of these works—*Mogielnica* (ca. 1972), *Brzozdowce II* (1973), *Targowica II* (ca. 1973), etc.—are meant to commemorate Polish synagogues destroyed by the Nazis in World War II. It cannot be said that this lugubrious reference is recalled in any way by the works, which are irregularly shaped constructions of mixed media on board or aluminum. As it happens, most of them resemble blown-up relief versions of Malevich's Supremacist drawings. While Mr. Rubin is not given to dispensing criticism in his catalogue essay, he does admit that the Polish series "has what is for Stella a relatively high incidence of near misses and outright failures." In fact, though, the handful he has chosen to show here are the most modest, most simply decorative, and least demanding of any works in the exhibition. They do succeed, but only by not aspiring very highly.

In the mid-Seventies, Stella painted a series of large (just over eleven feet) square canvases depicting a small central square surrounded by some twenty uniformly wide square bands of deliberately graded colors, each separated by a thin off-white line. Dubbed the Diderot series, they take their titles from various books by the great figure of the Enlightenment: *Le Rêve de d'Alembert* (1974; this one is a double square, almost twenty-four feet long), *Bijoux indiscrets* (1974), *Jacques le fataliste* (1974), and so on. The effect of the paintings, with their relentless, color-wheel-like repetitions, is somewhere between a mediocre Vasarely and those optical tests that one finds in introductory textbooks on perception. Mr. Rubin tells us that Stella sees the paintings as evoking "the notion of the critic," especially in the figure of Stella's college friend and influential early champion, Michael Fried, who was deeply interested in Diderot at the time. But again, like so many of Stella's works, the paintings in the Diderot series prompt us to reflect not on their ostensible subject but on the wholly arbitrary nature of Stella's fanciful titles.

The rest of the exhibition is devoted to examples from the several series of large reliefs that have absorbed Stella's interest for the last decade. Though at first glance these works have an aggressively improvisatory feel, they, too, are elaborately planned out and (to use a term Stella favors) "engineered." As Stella notes, the works in the Polish Village series were the last reliefs that were not "fabricated entirely in factories." Mr. Rubin explains in great detail that, since the Exotic Bird series in 1976, Stella's typical procedure has been to use mechanical engineering templates to trace various curves on graph paper. When he arrives at a design he likes, he has a maquette made, from which finished versions of the reliefs—generally enlarged by factors of 3 and 5.5—are fabricated. The finished reliefs are then sent to his studio to be painted. "An important aspect of using the templates," Stella said in a recent interview,

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> was that they permitted me to effect my own version of coming free on the surface. I was now free to do easily what most people did the hard way. I could make so-called relational paintings or, rather, the structural schemas for such paintings, just by sliding the templates around the surface. No need to erase, paint out, or redo. Only when I had the composition the way I wanted it was it transferred to the graph paper—directly into a mechanical drawing—and then into a three-dimensional Foamcore maquette, where I turned the template forms at angles to the picture surface.

Mr. Rubin presents Stella's methods with admirable clarity. But behind the question of Stella's methods of fabrication lies another, more difficult question: how good are the reliefs as works of art? On this question I am afraid that Mr. Rubin is a less reliable guide. Of the Indian Bird series, for example, Mr. Rubin speaks of "their appearance of willful 'bad taste.'" Perhaps he was thinking of their muddy carnival colors; or the sequin-like glitter that is sprinkled here and there on the twisted maze of curvilinear planes that constitute their "façade"; or the willfully ugly mass of mesh or metal tubing that provides their support. Any or all would do to confirm the charge of bad taste, though none really explain Mr. Rubin's insistence on scare quotes.

Then again, Mr. Rubin describes *Misano* (1982) as "one of the most classically ordered of Stella's metal reliefs" and applauds in particular Stella's "ability to handle a multi-layered configuration of highly variegated components without slipping into visual congestion." Without slipping into visual congestion? Judgments about this sort of thing can be very personal, of course; but if the issue is visual congestion, then to my eye Stella's agglomerations of garishly colored strips of etched aluminum and magnesium, far from being "classically ordered," seem like the artistic equivalent of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway at about 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before Labor Day.

When it comes to the nitty-gritty of artistic production, Mr. Rubin is a diligent scholar. The present catalogue, like his catalogue for the 1970 retrospective, devotes the most meticulous attention to ascertaining Stella's professed artistic aims, materials, methods of composition, sources of titles, and so on. This is no doubt a laudable impulse. But the truth is that such painstaking scholarship gains value in proportion to the value of its object of study. When it is applied to most living artists, the effect is bound to be slightly ludicrous. It puts one in the position of solemnly pronouncing on artistic and biographical details that are of only the most ephemeral interest. Stella's enthusiasm for racing cars surely belongs to this category. And Mr. Rubin's announcement that this interest influenced Stella's name for the Circuit series cannot but strike one as slightly comic (as indeed does the photograph he reproduces of Stella with a racing car driver, an executive from BMW, and a car whose decoration he designed).

But if Mr. Rubin's scholarly zeal seems at times comically misplaced, I am afraid that his style of writing is unlikely to bring smiles to the faces of many readers. No one, at any rate, can accuse him of being an overly felicitous writer. The catalogue is full of bewildering observations like "Stella's use in the Circuits of new forms (such as Flexicurves), compound template shapes, and recuperated or residual shapes constituted, morphologically speaking, a quantum change in his work," or "We have also seen Stella recuperate the *Malerischkeit* [painterliness] of Abstract Expressionism in a forward-looking manner that subsumed an interest in graffiti." Clearly, Mr. Rubin has an irresistible fondness for this peculiar transitive use of the word "recuperate": "Picasso recuperated figurative drawing"; "[s]uch forms . . . were recuperated by Stella"; "[w]e have already observed that the later Circuits were increasingly made up of 'accidental' or 'found' shapes taken from elements recuperated from the procedure of cutting out the templates"—this last meaning, one supposes, that in the Circuits Stella used bits of material left over from the fabrication of other works.

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Walking through the Stella exhibition, one catches traces of many artistic precursors. Mr. Rubin outlines the important influence of Jackson Pollock and Jasper Johns on Stella's early works, and notes, but fails to detail, the influence of the Modern's great 1980 Picasso retrospective. In Stella's own estimation, "The struggle to make the forms in the painting 'real,' to make them physically present, is the lesson . . . which I learned from Picasso. It's not the presence of a recognizable figure in Picasso that in itself makes things real, but his ability to project the image and to have it be so physical, so painted. It's so aggressively painted that it bursts out into image, and that image has a sense of being real, of breaking through pictorial boundaries to coexist in our everyday space." In fact, this bold manipulation of space is not the only thing Stella learned from that Picasso exhibition. As the briefest glance at works like *St. Michael's Counterguard* (1984), *Giufà e la statua di gesso* (1985), or *Salta nel mio sacco!* (1985) show, he also absorbed a good deal of Picasso's formal Cubist vocabulary, right down to the juxtaposition of specific abstract forms and color values. Such works seem like nothing so much as simplified three-dimensional re-enactments of paintings like *The Embrace* (1925), and one is left wondering whether whatever visual strength they possess is not due as much to Picasso's ingenuity as to Stella's.

Picasso is no doubt the most distinguished modern artistic presence haunting Stella's recent work. But he is by no means the only one. As Mr. Rubin notes, David Smith's Zig series echoes strongly in Stella's *Welkom* (1982). And the comic-book palette and busy, schematic composition of some of his best known pieces from the so-called Cones and Pillars series—*Diavolozoppo* (1984), for example—impress one as take-offs, alas, of the campy cartoons that Roy Lichtenstein has been peddling as works of art for over two decades. More subtly—if not, perhaps, more successfully—many other of Stella's recent works, like *La vecchia dell'orto* (1986) or *Lo sciocco senza paura* (1985), seem constructed from backgrounds of second-rate de Koonings upon which are affixed a noisy appurtenance of cones, triangles, and curves. The conjunctions are not notably successful.

Yet there is no doubt that Stella has a gift for the bold optical gesture. Among his recent works, *Shards V* (1983), a large, brightly colored melange on aluminum, perhaps best epitomizes the striking effects he can achieve in his reliefs. The dazzling turmoil of shapes, knit together by four intersecting orthogonal elements, is strangely arresting. But—and this is a question that recurs again and again as one contemplates the works in this exhibition—is this relief effective primarily as *art*? Or is its appeal—when it exercises an appeal—more narrowly *perceptual*? All too often, I'm afraid, one must concede the latter. For beneath the calculated circus glitz there is very little of aesthetic substance in Stella's reliefs: they claim our attention primarily not as works of art but as exotic optical curiosities. That their novelty and interest tends to fade quickly on re-viewing is a sure sign of this aesthetic poverty.

In my view, Stella's best works in this exhibition are also his least characteristic. Early reliefs like *Newell's Hawaiian shearwater* (1976) and *Eskimo curlew* (1976) succeed partly because they oscillate tantalizingly between painting and sculpture, preserving a tension between the genres that later reliefs surreptitiously resolve almost entirely in favor of sculpture. On the other hand, perhaps the single most successful work in the exhibition, *Mellieha Bay* (1983), a mixed media relief on fiberboard and other materials, impresses one simply and wholly as a competent, if somewhat dated, sculptural relief. But it stands out so vividly in the subterranean galleries the Modern has devoted to Stella because it lacks his signature pictorial devices: the jutting, brightly painted curves and squiggles of the earlier reliefs, the schematic boldness of the Cones and Pillars series. *Mellieha Bay* is at once the quietest and the most authoritative work in the exhibition.

In his essay for the 1970 Stella retrospective, Mr. Rubin took issue with the prevail-

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ing wisdom that a "second phase" in the artist's development began when he embarked on the Irregular Polygon paintings in 1966-1967. According to Mr. Rubin, this view oversimplifies the many continuities between Stella's work in the late Sixties and his earlier work. In the present catalogue, however, he has committed himself to the idea that by now Stella has in fact embarked upon a "second career." But this second career is said to have begun not with the shaped paintings of the Sixties, but with the large-scale reliefs that Stella began in the mid-Seventies.

In this context, Mr. Rubin distinguishes between Stella's early Minimalist paintings and his later "maximalist" reliefs; the principle was exclusion in the former, inclusion in the later. "Stella conceived of his new abstract 'figures' above all as a means of creating and articulating a viable new space," he tells us, "one that could compensate nonfigurative painting for the space choked out of it by medium-oriented painters in the decades following Abstract Expressionism." Stella's overriding question, in Mr. Rubin's words, was "how much could he subsume from the neighboring plastic arts of sculpture and architecture and still be making paintings? And how many of the lapsed conventions of painting itself—in the realm of configuration, spatial structure, and even narrative form—could be redeployed in an art that still remained wholly abstract?" These are indeed excellent questions, and Mr. Rubin is merely echoing Stella himself when he suggests that contemporary abstract painting may freely poach on sculpture and architecture, that the pictorial elements abstract painting publicly discarded in the Forties, Fifties, and early Sixties may be quietly let in the back door with impunity.

In a recent interview, Stella accepted the terms "painted reliefs" or "relief paintings" to describe his work, but added, "the impulse that goes into them is pictorial, and they live or die on my pictorial abilities, not my abilities as a sculptor." Mr. Rubin does yeoman's service attempting to persuade us that Stella's work has remained essentially pictorial. He asks us, for example, to distinguish between "the pictorial" and "the sculptural" rather than between "painting" and "sculpture"—because such "nouns" are "too inflexible to contain modernist innovations and mutations." But it will take more than such grammatical legerdemain to convince anyone that Stella's large reliefs can be experienced as anything other than a species of wall sculpture.

These days when artists or critics invoke recent developments in science or mathematics to explain art (quantum mechanics and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle remain the two favorites in this regard), one can be reasonably sure that they are talking flapdoodle. Stella generally avoids this sort of thing, but in his continuing effort to convince us that his recent art is primarily pictorial, not sculptural, he is willing to try anything. "Mathematicians talk now about figures of 1.78 dimensions or 2.3 dimensions," Stella informs us. "Pictorial space is one in which you have two-dimensional forms tricked out to give the appearance of three-dimensional ones, so that the space you actually perceive comes down somewhere in-between . . . . I work away from the flat surface but I still don't want to be three dimensional; that is, totally literal . . . more than two dimensions but short of three so, for me, 2.7 is probably a very good place to be." The problem is, of course, that Stella's recent works are not "somewhere in-between" two dimensions and three dimensions: they are adamantly, aggressively three-dimensional, often extending three or four feet from the wall. Repeatedly insisting that these works are essentially pictorial, not sculptural, does nothing to alter that elementary fact.

Quite apart from whatever artistic merits his work happens to possess, one of the things that has reinforced Stella's prominent place in the art world today is his articulate insight into the plight of contemporary abstract painting. Stella has always been eloquent on this score. His most sustained diagnosis of that plight appears in the book based on his 1983 Norton lectures, *Working*

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Space.[2] Stella begins by complaining that since the late 1960s abstract painting has been too neat, too safe, too antiseptic. It achieves "surface coherence at the expense of pictorial energy . . . . [W]hat we are left with is illustrated space which we can read; what we have lost is created space which we could feel." "In the end," he writes,

> it comes down to this: abstraction has left behind the tradition of figurative painting that began with the Renaissance, and instead has taken with it the worst illustrational bias that Western figurative art had developed: its notion of averaging effects, of smoothing over spatial transitions. This had disastrous effects because it forced abstraction to start out cautiously. Abstraction has come to be in need of extraordinary effects rather than average effects—in need of bold displacements rather than smooth transitions.

Working Space culminates in the extraordinary claim that "the aim of art is to create space—space that is not compromised by decoration or illustration . . . . This is what painting has always been about." Like so much in the book—including Stella's main thesis that the crisis in twentieth-century abstract painting parallels a crisis in painting that occurred at the end of the sixteenth century—this assertion is accurate neither as an art historical statement nor as a description of the ambition of contemporary painting. But it does go some distance as a description of Stella's own artistic ambitions. The historical inspiration for Stella's indictment is Caravaggio, whose "confrontational, projective illusionism" Stella proposes as an antidote to the sterility of contemporary abstraction. *Mirabile dictu,* it soon becomes clear that Stella sees himself as a new Caravaggio and that he regards his recent work as implementing the illusionistic lessons of the Lombardian painter in a contemporary key.

The program that Stella puts forth—or perhaps one should say "puts over"—in *Working Space* is a breathtaking fusion of contraries. Having once championed a notion of painting that was ferociously anti-illusionistic, Stella now emerges as a spokesman for a new brand of illusionism, not the "shallow illusionism" of mere illustration, of course, but something much grander. He wants his paintings to exhibit a contemporary version of "that spatial mobility which the human figure articulated in the illusionism of the Old Masters," but he doesn't want to re-introduce the human figure. He wants painting that has "the cast of reality," that can impart "the sensation of real presence and real action," without, be it noted, resorting to realism. Like many a good modernist abstract painter, Stella still insists that traditional realistic illusionism is "gone. It's used up"; but he nonetheless wants to make use of the *effects* of illusionism. In this context, Mr. Rubin obligingly distinguishes between the "holistic" illusionism of the Old Masters and the "fragmentary illusionism" that Stella practices. But at bottom what this means is that Stella wishes to have the cake he has just eaten: he wants to employ the histrionics and optical effects of realistic illusionism without committing himself to the strictures of mimetic fidelity that illusionism once served.

If nothing else, Stella's argument in *Working Space* helps explain why he has emerged as the corporate-office-lobby artist par excellence. His recent works have the look of modernist abstract art, but in fact they confront the viewer with an essentially sentimentalized, clichéd visual experience. Elsewhere I have examined the relation of Stella's argument in *Working Space* to the tradition of modernism.[3] Here it suffices to note that his works after the mid-Seventies effectively represent a complete inversion of the principles that animated his earlier work.

Mr. Rubin ended his 1970 catalogue with the remark that Stella's "endurance faces many challenges, not the least of which is

2 See Tim Hilton's review of *Working Space* in the February 1987 issue of *The New Criterion.*

3 See my article "Beyond Abstract Art?" in *Commentary,* March 1987, pp. 53-58.

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the quality of his own past." That is true enough. But Mr. Rubin himself has contributed mightily to an even greater challenge to Stella's endurance: the challenge of his wildly inflated reputation. Recalling a recent visit he made to Stella's studio, Mr. Rubin confides that he "could not but be overwhelmed by the sheer profusion of his ideas, and the immense outpouring of energy on which they ride." This is largely a rhetorical flourish, perhaps, serving as it does to conclude the essay. But it is entirely consistent with the "great artist" motif that he pursues throughout his text, the "like all great painters" gambit he employs to assure us of Stella's towering eminence. Accordingly, there is a good deal of talk about Stella's "genius," and even the artist's limitations are enlisted to enhance his reputation. Noting "vestiges of a certain banality" in Stella's work, Mr. Rubin begins his essay by suggesting that they only underscore its sophisticated popularity, the popularity of all "truly universal" art—"at least," he tells us, "I take this to be among the lessons of Dante, Shakespeare, and Picasso." Dante, Shakespeare, and Picasso? Dante, Shakespeare, Picasso, and . . . *Stella*? The cruel result of such extravagantly disproportionate praise is that it tends to backfire, redounding not to the artist's glory but to his denigration. It is never long before an edifice of empty superlatives crumbles, and the more unbelievable the initial claims, the more stringent the reassessment. The effect is a climate of suspicion that makes it harder to appreciate or even perceive an artist's real, albeit more modest, accomplishments. This full scale exhibition of Stella's recent works reminds us just how modest his achievement has been; the fulsome catalogue merely undermines our appreciation of that achievement.

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"Djuna Barnes" Charcoal, PEGGY BACON, c. 1930

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Dead forms: the ghost story today

by Brad Leithauser

Whether there is any *necessary* link between a devotion to afternoon sweets, queuing, and windowbox gardening on the one hand, and a passion for the ghost story on the other, would be hard to say. But one can assert without question about that puzzling thing, the English national temper, that it shows a deep affinity for the tale sprung from a restless grave.

In the last two centuries, beginning with Sir Walter Scott, the ghost story has flourished in England with an artistry and range probably unmatched throughout the world. Dickens, George Eliot, Gaskell, Hardy, Kipling, Wells, de la Mare, Maugham, and Elizabeth Bowen all composed ghost stories. And if in recent years the genre has not stirred the catholic wealth of talents it once did, the ghost story in England continues to attract both sophisticated readers and discerning critical regard to an extent unknown in America. Last year saw the appearance in England of a host of well produced and for the most part commendably sober-looking volumes, among them *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories, The Ghost Stories of M. R. James, The Mammoth Book of Classic Chills,* E. F. Benson's *Tales of an Empty House,* and *The Ghost Hunter's Guide,* by Peter Underwood, who according to the book's dust jacket is president of the Ghost Club (founded 1856).[1] These volumes come swaying lightly on the heels of *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories* and *The Penguin Book of Horror Stories,*[2] both of which—provided one ventures past the skulls and graveyards of their juvenile, lurid covers—turn out to be intended for the adult reader and to offer extensive and erudite introductions by J. A. Cuddon, who previously edited Penguin's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms.* And in recent months, Oxford has published a paperback selection of the ghost stories of M. R. James in its World's Classics series—to sit on the same shelf with Austen and Thackeray and Tolstoy.

If the English commitment to the ghost story is indisputable, some doubts may linger as to whether over the years an isolable genre, the English Ghost Story, was created—as Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert assert in their introduction to *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories.* On the one hand, the tales that the two of them have assembled do evince a range of penchants and preoccupations typically thought of as English: a fluent understatement; an imagination drawn to old manorial houses; a nervous harkening to ancestral claims and privileges; and a sense of uneasy doubt, of whispering guilt, about the entitlements and morals of the upper classes (for it is almost

1 *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories,* edited by Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert (504 pages, $18.95) and *The Ghost Stories of M. R. James* (224 pages, $22.95) were simultaneously issued in this country in April by Oxford University Press.

2 *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories* and *The Penguin Book of Horror Stories* were published here in 1985.

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invariably the moneyed and leisured who are visited by ghosts, those unruly guests who appear unannounced and without calling cards; the lower classes in these tales often serve as buffers, behind which the rich and normally powerful seek, vainly, to barricade themselves). On the other hand, American and Continental ghost stories have always displayed these elements, too, to varying degrees. That two Americans, Henry James and Edith Wharton, are included in the Oxford anthology, and mix harmoniously there, proves little either way, given how English were their lives and tastes.

The claims on behalf of the English ghost story as a distinct genre are methodically—and to my mind persuasively—set out in Julia Briggs's superlative study, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (1977). Tracing its origins to the eighteenth century and the rise of the gothic novel, she follows the ghost story as far forward as Kingsley Amis's *The Green Man*. But she devotes the bulk of her study to what she perceives as the tale's "golden age," a period extending roughly from the last two decades of the nineteenth century through the first two decades of the twentieth. She is categorically pessimistic about its current state and prospects: "Traditionally the form has affinities with mystery and detective stories and, more recently, science fiction, yet while these first cousins have maintained a certain vitality in the mid-twentieth century, the ghost story now seems to look back over its shoulder. It has become a vehicle for nostalgia, a formulaic exercise content merely to recreate a Dickensian or Monty Jamesian atmosphere. It no longer has any capacity for growth or adaptation." The reasons behind its decline are doubtless multiple and intertwined, although Briggs makes a good case that the primary one may have been the Great War, whose horrors eclipsed and rendered quaintly innocuous a genre associated with the Victorian fireside.

The rise of the genre, no less than its fall, is wrapped in mystery. On the face of it, the most surprising thing about the ghost story is that it took so long to emerge. In the theater, ghosts had held the stage since Shakespeare's day. And of course in England, as in the rest of the world, ghost stories in the form of folktales had been circulating since time immemorial. But not until the middle of the nineteenth century did the ghost story acquire both that union of authorial convention and readerly expectation which characterizes a healthy genre and that full expansiveness and sophistication which often mark the transition from the oral to the written tale. A number of nineteenth-century writers, Hardy most notably, drew on oral lore for their ghostly tales; and a return to the folktale may be useful as well to the reader of the modern ghost story, if he would view it with clarity. For whether produced in England, America, or the Continent, the modern—which is to say written—ghost story is apt to employ a pattern of literary conventions and aims whose very pervasiveness renders them obscure.

The ghost story in its folktale form usually divides neatly into two sections, which I shall call the Recognition and the Release. The former extends from the tale's beginning until that moment in which the protagonist first perceives himself unquestionably in the presence of a supernatural being. The Release, which comprises the rest of the tale, unfolds the precise manner of the protagonist's escape—or, in unfortunate cases, his failure to escape. This bipartite structure is a ubiquitous one, found in folktales throughout the world.

A choice instance (and my own favorite of ghostly folktales) is "The Deacon of Myrka," which comes from Iceland. (The richness of the supernatural in Scandinavian folklore, often attributed to sunless arctic winters, may have reached its culmination in Iceland, whose inhabitants had the additional creative boon of inhabiting a volcanic land that smelled of sulphur and looked like the moon.) A story with numerous international variants, "The Deacon of Myrka" is of the tale-type known to folklorists as The Dead Bridegroom Carries Off His Bride. In its Icelandic incarnation, it gives us hapless Gudrun, a woman who lives on the remote

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farm of Baegisa. Gudrun's lover, the deacon of Myrka, invites her to some Christmas festivities and promises to fetch her on his horse. On Christmas Eve, Gudrun is seen waiting for him. The reader knows, though, of a tragedy whose news has not yet reached this farm. The deacon was drowned a few days before, while crossing the Horga River, and has already been buried.

Burial is not the end of this deacon, however, who arrives as scheduled and knocks heavily on the door. Gudrun can hardly see him in the darkness, wrapped as he is in coat and hat, and he offers her no greeting. But—with what would seem like courtesy—he does lift her up to sit behind him on his horse. They ride in silence. One suspects that Gudrun may be feeling grave misgivings, although nothing of her mental state is disclosed. In any case, the transition from the dully menacing to the sharply horrifying comes abruptly: "They came to the River Horga, where ice was still piled high along the banks; and as the horse leapt down from the ice into the water, the deacon's hat was jerked forward, and Gudrun saw the skull itself laid bare." This moment of Recognition is brilliantly chosen: with the river raging below her, Gudrun cannot leap free of the horse, unless she would drown as her dead but mobile lover already has drowned. "At that very moment," the tale continues, "the moon came out from behind the clouds and the deacon spoke:

> The moon glides,
> And Death rides;
> Don't you see a patch of white
> On this head of mine tonight,
> Garun, Garun?"

The deacon calls her Garun, a non-existent name, rather than Gudrun, because he—this devout man, the former deacon—can no longer utter the sound *gud,* Icelandic for god.

The rest of the story is given over to the details of Gudrun's Release—a protracted business, which includes the ringing of a churchyard bell, a physical struggle, the reading of psalms by a priest, and, finally, a magician's incantations and the rolling of a great rock over the deacon's grave. To the modern reader, the spirit's lengthy exorcism may seem anticlimactic. Certainly it is not the least bit scary, and the tale's concluding lines could hardly be more matter of fact: "After this, all the haunting stopped, and Gudrun grew more cheerful. A little later she went home to Baegisa, but people say she was never the same again." To stave off a sense of disappointment, the modern reader must remain mindful of the tale's intent: it aims, like so much folklore, at instruction. "The Deacon of Myrka" offers practical information about those exacting spirits which, as its listeners were well aware, surround us on all sides. It is a "how-to" story—advice on the best ways to de-spook yourself.

In the modern ghost story, the Release usually occurs very near the tale's close and arrives in a compressed, telescoped fashion —if it is not dropped altogether. The moment of Recognition, by contrast, which often met an abrupt and almost perfunctory treatment in the folktale, becomes the focus for all of the writer's ingenuity and craftsmanship. In its handling, more than in any other aspect of the tale, his artistry will be revealed and evaluated.

The shift in emphasis introduced by the modern story represented more than a mere alteration of the oral tale's tone: it signaled a realignment of authorial aims, and with it the possibility of a distinct new genre. The tale was changed throughout, but nowhere more strikingly than in its treatment of the ghosts that drive the plot. In folktales, ghosts are apt to step quickly into the foreground and to remain there; in the written tale, they are usually background figures, observed far less often than their handiwork is. When Elizabeth Bowen pointed out the artistic efficacy of a "series of happenings whose horror lies in their being just, *just* out of the true," she was only making explicit what most modern practitioners of the ghost story had been implicitly expressing for years; but it is useful to recall that hers is a method that springs from a comparatively

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recent aesthetic and that applies to what is, historically speaking, a narrow range of tales. Only when placed in the sophisticated trappings of the written ghost story do spirits become, so to speak, insubstantial.

The withdrawal, or retreat, of the ghost reflects one of the great shifts in public attitudes that encouraged the birth of the written ghost story in the nineteenth century. A ghost that hangs in the background is often a vulnerable creature, bred for a doubting public; by and large, the modern tale emerges out of and depends upon a healthy skepticism. The connection which numerous critics have seen between the eighteenth century's "age of rationalism" and the nineteenth century's hankering for the ghost story makes a good deal of sense. A vapor of skepticism helps to create, somewhat paradoxically, an atmosphere in which the literary ghost can thrive. The written ghost story is likely to falter wherever ghosts are either believed in too unshakeably (constraining an author's artistic liberties) or dismissed outright (leaving the genre ripe for the condescensions of an author who would "go slumming"). The best stories often seem dark, pagan counterparts to conventionally religious cautionary tales. In both cases, rationalism is a besetting sin that calls for prompt punishment. (In Bowen's "The Cat Jumps," we know that Mr. and Mrs. Harold Wright are headed for trouble as soon as we read that they had "light, bright, shadowless, thoroughly disinfected minds.") For the ghost story, this need to answer rationalism's doubts, to summon the faithful back into the flock, has a bracing effect. It compels the author to present that moment when doubts are likely to be most intense—the Recognition—as powerfully and vividly, as *undeniably,* as possible. The result is an artful strengthening of the tale in a way that would once—in an earlier and more credulous age—have been unnecessary.

A second and closely related change in public attitudes was reflected in the explosive growth of supernatural literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The ghost story is close kin not only to the gothic novel but also to the horror story, as developed by E. T. A. Hoffmann in the early nineteenth century and perfected by Poe a few decades later. Collectively, the three genres suggest a radical shift in literary aesthetics and, hence, in world view. All are grounded in an appreciation of the pleasures of fear. They engender uneasiness, terror, distress, not merely as tools of edification or of moral injunction but also as self-justifying pleasures. This is an aesthetic with underpinnings in the theories of Edmund Burke, whose essay on "The Sublime and the Beautiful," published in 1756, praises "delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect and truest test of the sublime." Mary Shelley struck a similar line when recalling her aims for *Frankenstein*: she wished to "speak to the mysterious fears of nature and awaken thrilling horror." As she recounts in her introduction to the novel's second edition (1832), *Frankenstein*'s genesis lay in an extended visit which she and her husband paid Byron in Switzerland: "But it proved a wet, ungenial summer, and incessant rain often confined us for days to the house. Some volumes of ghost stories translated from the German into French fell into our hands . . . . 'We will each write a ghost story,' said Lord Byron, and his proposition was acceded to." This suggestion antedated by about a decade Scott's "invention" of the English ghost story, and shows that the form was stirring uneasily in its womb, or tomb.

If a thing of beauty is a joy forever, a thing of thrilling fear is often a short-lived pleasure. Which is to say, the ghost story proves a perishable commodity. What stirs shivers in one generation may well elicit titters in the next, since a ghost story that fails to frighten usually seems ludicrous. We read it with unavoidable condescension. Few other genres, if any, are so unextenuatingly hit-or-miss. And a ghost story that "misses" in this crucial matter of awakening our fears has little to offer. It is no longer interesting (in the sense of lively or engrossing), but is condemned, at best, to be "interesting" (in

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the academic's sense, meaning sociologically instructive, or illuminatingly primitive, or some such thing). In that elemental cosmos which the ghost story erects, the reader typically sees one of two things happen. Either "they" beat "us" (superstition momentarily triumphs, as the spirits of the dead, overmastering our every doubt, assert their existence) or "we" beat "them" (rationalism remains unshaken, and we can laugh at another clumsy attempt to play upon our childish fears).

A genre that aims at the sublime (in Burke's sense) will differ radically from one that pursues the conventionally beautiful. It is illogical, then, to suppose that a talent for realistic fiction will necessarily carry over into the realm of the supernatural. In his introduction to *Roald Dahl's Book of Ghost Stories* (1983), Dahl turns to a different genre for an instructive anecdote: "Quite a long time ago, a New York publisher . . . had what they thought was a brilliant idea. They decided to invite all the most celebrated writers in the English-speaking world to write a children's story. They would then combine all the results in one volume and they would have a classic on their hands . . . . The stories came in. I saw each one of them. Only one writer, Robert Graves, had any conception of how to write for children. The rest of the stories were guaranteed to anaesthetize in two minutes flat any unfortunate child who got hold of them." The ghost story, like the children's story, is a genre to itself. Seeking literary respectability, anthologists of ghost stories often make the mistake (which Dahl in his collection avoids) of going for "big names." But a mediocre story is a credit to no one and to nothing. The resulting anthologies are a disservice both to their readers and to those lesser-known writers—like A. M. Burrage and Rosemary Timperley and Mary E. Wilkins—who have created some of the most accomplished pieces in this singular genre.

One cause of its singularity—and a cause, as well, of many unwittingly comic moments—is the central place that it must give to the indescribable. In no other genre does the reader stumble so frequently over phrases like "no one can convey" and "there are no words" and "an inexpressible feeling." Of course, the reader must sympathize with the writer's task—to depict the walking dead is no humdrum undertaking—even while wincing at such stock phrases (or at a kindred infelicity, the desperate overuse of italics). In the work of adept writers, much artistry goes into this task of expressing the inexpressible, which is often facilitated by means of a narrative frame; the tale will be told by someone without firsthand experience of ghosts, someone who may echo, at least at first, the reader's own skepticism. Obliquity of this sort often enhances the reader's uneasiness; he is apt to feel cut off, uninformed. In a story like A. M. Burrage's "One Who Saw," for example, we are not told what Simon Crutchley beheld that made his hair go white. We only know, teasingly, eerily, that it left "one or two peculiar aversions . . . . He can't bear to be touched, or to hear anybody laugh."

The ghost story is singular, too, in its tendency to disappoint the reader time and again in its last few paragraphs. Perhaps no other literary form can be depended upon so reliably to leave the reader feeling let down. According to one of its conventions (a sensible rule, ignored at the author's peril), whatever mysteries the story advances must be explained; the ghost's behavior must finally conform to some pattern of motivation. Unfortunately, such explanations are rarely so satisfying as the edgy wonderment of the mysteries it would clarify. Although the reader of a ghost story wants everything "tied up" in the end, the tying up is not itself a primary appeal of the genre (as it is, say, in the murder mystery). No, the reader comes to the ghost story for that uncertain, skittery sensation that arises when the laws of science no longer seem to apply but nobody can say what has supplanted them. In a story like Robert Aickman's excellent "Ringing the Changes," for example, one thrills as the heroine calls nervously across a dark beach, "What sort of seaport is it that has no sea?"—even as one recognizes that no explana-

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tion which would account for a missing ocean could ever equal the highstrung splendor of this moment.

A principle of strict accounting obtains in the ghost story. With few exceptions, any ghosts that are promised must in time be delivered. Those stories in which the supernatural ultimately yields to the natural, in which all spirits dissolve in the light of science, are unacceptable almost without qualification. In this sense, the ghost story runs strictly counter to a genre like the bedroom farce, whose conventions require that an unpleasant possibility (typically, a wife's infidelity) should be made to look mountingly irrefutable, only to be cleared spotlessly away at the finish. In the bedroom farce, the fun lies in the certainty that all will come right before long. But in the ghost story, we feel displeased, almost resentful, if a promised unpleasantness turns out to be anything other than unpleasant.

L. P. Hartley, a gifted writer of ghost stories, made on their behalf what sounds like a wildly exorbitant claim: he called them "certainly the most exacting form of literary art." But if one considers how many first-rate writers have attempted the form, and how few first-rate stories have resulted, Hartley's pronouncement sounds reasonable. Unfortunately, it is only the rarest of ghost stories that repays a second reading. And this is hardly surprising, given the demands one asks of the form: at the very least, a discriminating reader requires a clever and fresh relationship between haunted and haunter; a lively manipulation of the genre's clichés; and an effortless transcending of everyday reality. In addition, one hopes for all those virtues that make the writing of an "ordinary story" so difficult: deft pacing, sharp dialogue, a felicitous way with words.

If, as Julia Briggs asserts, the genre is moribund and irrecoverable, the aficionado's largest regret must be that so few masterpieces emerged from its brief heyday. Collections like the Oxford or Penguin anthologies leave the reader tantalized by the genre's untapped (and now, perhaps, untappable) potential. Time and again, one comes upon a story that hints of unexplored pathways. Somerset Maugham's "The Taipan," for example, although a predictable and at times maladroit tale, reverberates with lost promise. It is set in China, where its unnamed English protagonist has lived for so many years that the Orient has become his true home. For him, there will be no final, twilight return to England: "he had seen too many men do that and he knew how often it was a failure; he meant to take a house near the racecourse in Shanghai . . . . But he had a good many years before he need think of retiring." He feels himself at home, anyway, until he encounters one morning some coolies digging a grave that inexplicably unnerves him (it turns out, not surprisingly, to be his own). A sense of painful, fuddled isolation suddenly flows through his expatriate's soul: "He felt a horror of the winding multitudinous streets of the Chinese city, and there was something ghastly and terrible in the convoluted roofs of the temples with their devils grimacing and tortured. He loathed the smells that assaulted his nostrils. And the people." The dislocations of Empire, and especially those of colonists in torrid climates, destined to feel haunted by a cool, misty country thousands of miles away, would appear to be an ideal matter for ghost stories. Similarly, Kipling's wonderful "The Return of Imray" (one of his few successful ghost stories) leaves a lingering sense of the sadly unrealized. A man named Imray, a minor officer at a small Indian station, disappears and a police officer named Strickland eventually rents Imray's vacated bungalow. When Imray's murdered body is found perched on a beam in the roof, one realizes that although his affronted soul has been trying to communicate with Strickland, it has had greater success in reaching Strickland's dog. In its counterposing of Christian and pagan beliefs, imperial rationalism with a subjugated colony's mysticism, "The Return of Imray" creates another of those uneasy borderlands which would appear to be a perfect breeding ground for ghosts. It seems a shame that the English ghost story has so often confined itself to

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the English country house. Rich as England's treasury of ghost stories may be, it might have been far richer still.

One leaves to the statistician the precise likelihood that the two most accomplished writers of ghost stories in the English language would happen, though unrelated by blood, to share the same surname. Coincidence is a potent inducement to critical folly, and the fortuities of namesakes have sometimes led to all variety of incongruous comparisons (Frank O'Connor versus Flannery O'Connor, John O'Hara versus Frank O'Hara, and so forth). But in the case of Henry James and M. R. James, we have two writers who are logically and fruitfully juxtaposed. They are roughly contemporaries and represent the poles of an axis. Each had a genius for the ghost story, and together they embody the genre's two principal modes.

Henry James's tales of the supernatural are sufficiently well known to call for little explanation or celebration here. He is the master of the psychological ghost story. In his dense, consciously ambiguous tales, even the most bizarre and diabolical happenings can plausibly be regarded as nothing more than manifestations of mental quirks and imbalances. His are ghost stories that show less interest in the activities of the dead than in the abnormalities of the living. Any writer who regularly composes ghost stories will likely experience tensions between the demands of naturalism and those of supernaturalism (the need, that is, to develop simultaneously both living and dead characters), and at such points the writer may be forced to "declare his loyalties." In such circumstances, Henry James was apt to neglect his ghosts, since his primary goal was always the wresting of every possible psychological nuance from the people he had created; in his weaker tales, the ghosts can be (even by the standards prevailing among the dead) rather pallid. But in his best stories, of which fortunately there are a fair number, both sets of characters, worldly and otherworldly, seem richly purposed. We enter that world whose creation is perhaps the apical achievement of the ghostly tale—a world in which all the lovely, detailed tactility of everyday life co-exists beside the cool, forbidding looseness of the supernatural.

By contrast, the characters that M. R. James created are mostly of the sort that E. M. Forster called "flat"; almost immediately upon meeting them, the reader knows everything necessary about their inner lives. One comes to M. R. James's stories for their dexterity, their neatness, their playful erudition, and because, in one way or another, they deliver the goods: they're spooky. To those who know something of James's life, the tales are all the more gratifying for their happenstantial existence; the writing of ghost stories was something he took up almost by chance, as a sidelight to a career as a medievalist of international renown. His interest in antiquarian pursuits displayed itself precociously during his childhood in Surrey, where he grew up as the fourth and youngest child to a rector of great classical learning. His sister later recalled him at the age of six, housebound with a bronchial ailment, requesting that as a special treat he be permitted to wile away the long hours with "a certain seventeenth-century Dutch Bible which he had heard was in the possession of his father's friend, Bishop Ryle."

As befits an antiquarian, M. R. James often wrote his stories for the enactment of an old-fashioned scenario. Many were written as Christmas entertainments, to be read to a candle-lit circle of friends at King's College, Cambridge. The tales were eagerly received, and the demand was great for a new one each year. He had a flair for the ghost story, it turned out, and before he was done he composed some thirty of them, often at "fever heat."

Probably, M. R. James wrote a greater number of good ghost stories than any other writer in the language. Probably, also, he failed to write even one that was absolutely top flight. He never produced anything so fine as Oliver Onions's "The Beckoning Fair One," say, or Isak Dinesen's "Late Supper at Elsinore" or Muriel Spark's "The Portobello Road" or (my favorite of

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contemporary ghost stories) John Cheever's "Torch Song." And yet, this reservation being noted, I must add that Oxford University Press is to be commended for producing *The Ghost Stories of M. R. James* in an extraordinarily handsome hardcover edition, a book all the more praiseworthy given its risk of being deemed superfluous; the stories were already in print as a Penguin paperback. A tasteful lavishness is not something to which a writer of ghost stories is often treated.

Welcome in itself, for the quality of the work it contains, *The Ghost Stories of M. R. James* may also serve a useful, corrective function among critics. Perhaps because naturalism (in its most inclusive sense, as opposed to supernaturalism) remains in most countries an unshakeable literary orthodoxy, critics have often proved uncomfortable with the supernatural and grudging in their admiration. Now and then, the field has yielded a Poe or a Henry James, a Kafka or a Borges—someone whose genius cannot be denied or ignored. But by and large, a writer like M. R. James, a man of considerable talent but in the end an artist of the second rank, is rarely given his due. The result is both an unfair neglect of talent and a distortion of the tradition in which those elect others, the more-than-talented, have worked. To stand in the shadow of greatness should not necessarily mean to be obscured utterly, and in the literature of the supernatural M. R. James should be granted an honorable, interstitial place. It is a position that he, by most accounts an affable and unassuming man, doubtless would have relished.

When he turned, as occasionally he did in print, to consider the psychological roots of the ghost story's appeal, M. R. James had little to say. His prefaces make dull going. Actually, few writers of ghost stories have proved insightful analysts of the genre. The most incisive theorizing—what little there is of it—has been done by writers who wrote few if any ghost stories. Virginia Woolf, for instance, offered some lively, scattered observations about what she called "the strange human craving for the pleasure of feeling afraid." She observed that "It is pleasant to be afraid when we are conscious that we are in no kind of danger." This interplay between danger and safety suggests that one of the genre's appeals is the power it temporarily conveys: one calls up demons purely to exult in their helplessness. This is a thrill which, I suppose, also feeds on a peculiar form of nostalgia. Most of the adults who enjoy ghost stories probably also enjoyed them—but more dynamically, with a potent blend of pleasure and affliction—as children. The adult reader may bring to the ghost story an odd self-congratulation—the sweetness of returning, fortified by the certitudes of adulthood, to those creatures who were our bullies and tormentors during the suggestible nights of childhood.

Freud's venturesome essay on the "uncanny" ("Das Unheimliche") was a pioneer attempt to probe systematically our peculiar feelings about, among other things, the "return of the dead." The essay may suffer, as Freud concedes at the outset, from what he calls his "special obtuseness in the matter, where extreme delicacy of perception would be more in place. It is long since [I] had experienced or heard of anything which had given [me] an uncanny impression." His examples are likely to seem, to those either blessed or persecuted by greater "delicacy of perception" in this unsettling area, rather limited in scope. But in the depths of its ideas, and the breadth of the connections it makes, the essay lays a solid-seeming groundwork upon which any more thorough and ambitious study is likely to stand.

Freud located the source of most uncanny feelings in the uneasy cohabitation within us of rational judgment and a "residue of animistic mental activity." (One recalls Samuel Johnson on the existence of ghosts: "All reason is against it, and all belief for it.") At the outset of his essay, Freud offered a brief definition of the uncanny ("that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar"), which in subsequent pages he elaborated in ways that touched directly on the ghost story: ". . . this

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uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression . . . . Many people experience the feeling in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts . . . . Considering our unchanged attitude toward death, we might rather inquire what has become of the repression, which is the necessary condition of a primitive feeling recurring in the shape of something uncanny. But repression is there, too. All supposedly educated people have ceased to believe officially that the dead can become visible as spirits, and have made any such appearances dependent on improbable and remote conditions . . . ." Here is an explanation for that dizzily involuted confusion that is the hallmark of the uncanny: given the underlying familiarity of the uncanny object, we feel strange because we feel that we shouldn't feel strange. And although Freud's essay sought chiefly to identify the uncanny's sources rather than to take up the related question of why some minds are drawn so profoundly to a zone Freud himself characterized as one of "repulsion and distress," he did—like Virginia Woolf—imply that the tale provides an arena for expiation. In summoning that "surmounted" world of animistic thought, we are given a chance to reconcile ourselves to guilts that may be inaccessible to rational probing.

The ghost story would seem also to have a sizable but elusive sexual component. Rarely are ghost stories overtly sexual. (In A. S. Byatt's fine story "The July Ghost," the reader experiences a shock on coming across even this relatively demure passage: "She hissed at him 'Don't talk' between clenched teeth, so he stroked her lightly, over her nightdress, breasts and buttocks and long stiff legs, composed like an effigy on an Elizabethan tomb.") But the experience of reading them often feels oddly racy, and the language commonly employed in their description seems to parody a sexual encounter, often of a violent sort—"ravishing fear," "panting, helpless excitement," "innermost secrets," and so on. Any literary genre grounded in the aesthetics of fear rather than beauty will likely partake of some sort of alternate, parodic sexuality. Just as the conventionally beautiful has its goal and culmination in an experience—the catharsis—not entirely separable from sexual pleasure, the sublime has its own purgative climax, endearingly referred to as "the creeps": that thrillingly cold wash of fear which leaves the hairs on one's arms and neck on end. For children, whose appetite for ghostly tales is insatiable, this experience may serve as an initiatory foretaste of consummated adult sexuality. No wonder, then, that the child responds to these tales that Robert Louis Stevenson called "crawlers" with a wide-eyed, breathless ambivalence—a mix of signals that says "Please, don't tell me any more" and "But what happened then?"

This is an ambivalence paralleled in the minds of the tales' creators, regardless of when and where they live. Whatever the reigning system of belief, animistic or rational, the dead are approached uneasily; we have no comfortable way to deal with them. In the oral ghost stories, sprung from cultures pervaded by supernatural beliefs, one hears yearnings for a world free of all spirits, where the living can walk undisturbed. In the written tale, often composed for a skeptical audience by a skeptical author, one detects a different sort of wistfulness, a longing to see the dead reassert themselves. It seems there is a child inside us who, after complaining of a Spook in the closet, is rather disappointed when Science, that parental figure, comes along with its flashlight to prove there's nothing there. In its own way, a night cleansed of spooks turns out to be an unnerving, a discomposingly empty, place. For the skeptic, as for the believer, feelings of oppression are the common lot. The creator of ghost stories is forever trapped (and happily so, from the viewpoint of those for whom such tales are an endless delight) inside an unease that will find no tranquility on this side of the grave.

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"Is the symphony orchestra dead?": an exchange

by Ernest Fleischmann & Samuel Lipman

Letter from Ernest Fleischmann

Executive Director, Los Angeles Philharmonic Association

To the Editors:

It was inevitable that Samuel Lipman, that consistently amusing, often provocative "art-for-art's sake" gadfly, would find fault with the concerns I have expressed about the future of the symphony orchestra. It was probably also rather inevitable that he would omit and/or misrepresent—in his article "Is the Symphony Orchestra Dead?" (September, 1987)—a good deal of the essence of my arguments.

None of this would matter if his contribution to this urgent debate provided the stimulation and, indeed, wisdom one expects from someone whose views are given credence in the corridors of musical power. It is sad that, instead, Mr. Lipman saw fit to take up almost seven pages of his esteemed publication with his usual condemnation of musical administrators, those "enemies" of art "whose skills lie entirely in the merchandising of that which has already become famous somewhere else." While he admits that the symphony orchestra's "present condition is [neither] healthy [nor] happy," and further agrees that "the problems with orchestral life, and with musical life as a whole, are great," the solutions he puts forward can only be described as generalized clichés of surprising naïveté.

"It is time," writes Mr. Lipman, "for musicians to take their futures into their own hands, by demanding that conductors be chosen for their musical skills rather than for their European celebrity status." In actual fact, for many years now, musicians in our orchestras have provided detailed, informed, forceful, and constructive contributions to the choice of conductors by means of "conductor evaluation" surveys developed by the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (I.C.S.O.M.). The results of these surveys are made available to the music directors and managements of most orchestras, none of whom would be foolish enough to engage or re-engage a conductor about whom there is a negative consensus among the musicians, whatever that conductor's "celebrity status" or country of origin. (Mr. Lipman seems unduly obsessed with what he calls "European" conductors, in spite of the fact that nowadays such Americans as Leonard Bernstein, James Levine, Michael Tilson Thomas, Lorin Maazel, André Previn, Leonard Slatkin, and David Zinman enjoy reputations of the utmost eminence among the world's leading musical institutions.)

Another of Mr. Lipman's remedies for resolving the present musical malaise is for musicians to "take seriously the problem of contemporary composition. This can only be done by performers demanding new music that they, as musicians, can love. There is nothing wrong with musical life,"

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he proclaims, "that serious conductors in charge of great orchestras, playing new compositions of permanent value, cannot cure."

The number, and the profundity, of the questions begged by Mr. Lipman's glib nostrum would confound a Theodor Adorno, let alone a mere musician-turned-administrator like myself.

To suggest that, by and large, performers do not take the problem of contemporary composition with the utmost seriousness is arrogant and insulting to every musician; to insist that musicians "demand" new music that they can "love" is tantamount to ordering a woman or man to find a perfect mate; it is indeed nothing less than that same "arrant utopianism" which Mr. Lipman seeks to attack in my suggestions for a more flexible orchestral community. Is it the music of Elliott Carter that all musicians must love, or the music of Ned Rorem? The music of Steve Reich or of Pierre Boulez? Of Witold Lutoslawski or Joan Tower? It is surely the music of all, or none, or some of these composers that different musicians will find of interest; some of them may even "love" their music. Above all, every orchestral musician who wishes to do so should be given opportunities to play the music of our time—whether works for full orchestra or for the smaller combinations that many composers seem to favor—and it is the orchestral institution that is usually able to provide those opportunities under good artistic (rehearsal and performance) conditions.

And then, there is Mr. Lipman's final, triumphant cure for our orchestral ills: the performance of "new compositions of permanent value" by "serious conductors in charge of great orchestras." Even though musicians and critics all the world over constantly experience genuine difficulties in discerning which, if any, "new compositions" may conceivably be "of permanent value," it is no doubt Mr. Lipman who, through his superior musicianship and penetrating critical insight, is able to select those works for us that are certain to be regarded as masterpieces for all time. Naturally only those conductors prepared to play Mr. Lipman's predetermined masterpieces can be considered "serious"; and it is they—the serious conductor-doctors—who will thus cure the maladies that have befallen our musical life.

How I wish it were all so simple! After a virtual lifetime spent first as a student, then as a practitioner, and, for the last thirty-five years, as one of those dreaded administrators, I find myself caring and worrying more than ever about the art and the artists from whom I and millions of others have derived so much profound joy, so much life-enhancing satisfaction. My working contacts with countless musicians over some four decades have convinced me that most of them are unable to realize their full potential as artists within the rigid structure of the conventional symphony orchestra. At the same time, it is obvious that the institution of the orchestra—whether we like it or not, it is an institution that wields a certain amount of influence, even power, in our musical life—is not always able to fulfill its responsibilities to its audience or indeed to the art of music within its present structure and form of operation. That is why I have put forward certain ideas and proposals which were embodied in the commencement address I gave at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Those ideas, I am happy to say, have evoked a spirited and constructive response from a number of concerned musicians. The debate is obviously still continuing. Perhaps even Mr. Lipman may reflect and reconsider; perhaps even he may be persuaded to make a positive contribution without suspecting a power-hungry arts administrator to lurk behind every proposal.

Samuel Lipman replies:

Mr. Fleischmann begins his letter with a compliment which I am afraid he perhaps does not intend, and which I am quite sure I do not deserve. He calls me a "gadfly," a word that exists for us on two levels, the first of which—the dictionary definition—does indeed express his opinion: thus, in the

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Oxford English Dictionary we find "GADFLY . . . a fly which bites and goads cattle . . . *fig.* One who irritates, torments, or worries another." Alas for Mr. Fleischmann's laying about himself with epithets, "gadfly" was Socrates's description, in Jowett's standard translation of the *Apology,* of himself. Socrates described himself as a gadfly called by the god to attend the great and noble steed of the state, "tardy in his motions owing to his very size, [who] requires to be stirred into life." As with the state, so with art and culture: he who sets himself against the inefficient and often corrupt working of the *status quo* may have the best of the argument, but he will surely have the worst of the career. Fortunately for my fate, neither my courage nor my wisdom is so great as that of Socrates, and we do live in a free society. Still, I suppose the historical reference suggested by this bit of mud-slinging does show just how serious Mr. Fleischmann takes being criticized.

Mr. Fleischmann reproaches me for concentrating on "my usual condemnation of musical administrators," while putting forward merely "solutions . . . [that] can only be described as generalized clichés of surprising naïveté." I am afraid that, as will quickly be seen from a discussion of his criticisms of my "solutions," what are for me principles which must underlie artistic organization and practice are for him merely naïve and generalized clichés.

When I ask that musicians demand that their conductors be chosen on the basis of "musical skills rather than for their European celebrity status," Mr. Fleischmann points out that orchestral players are consulted "in most orchestras" via surveys prepared by the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians. Does this supposed consultation explain why Zubin Mehta was re-appointed as music director of the New York Philharmonic in 1983 after convincing evidence surfaced, via *The New York Times,* of widespread player opposition to him? And would Mr. Fleischmann deny that perhaps the major factor in the willingness of the Philharmonic musicians to accept Mehta in the first place almost a decade ago (after he had earlier insulted the orchestra) was not his musical abilities but rather the hope that his non-American celebrity reputation would sell records and thereby earn additional compensation for them?

It would be unfair to single out the Philharmonic for this criticism. In Boston, Seiji Ozawa, long the target of player dissatisfaction, has remained in his position due to the wishes, not of the orchestra (or audience or critics), but rather of the Boston Symphony Orchestra's management, its board, and Mr. Ozawa's New York management. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the vaunted orchestra questionnaires, even when they are taken seriously by the players involved, give every appearance of being little more than conveniences for management, good to use when they come out the "right" way, and easy to ignore when they don't.

Mr. Fleischmann goes on to mock my hope that musicians will demand "new music that they, as musicians, can love." He then humbly finds that "[t]he number, and the profundity, of the questions begged by Mr. Lipman's glib nostrum would confound a Theodor Adorno, let alone a mere musician-turned-administrator like myself." It is touching to see Mr. Fleischmann's regard for a man who must be one of the great intellectual obfuscators of the twentieth century; in any case, it was Adorno's specialty, just as it is Mr. Fleischmann's, to confound others, not to be confounded himself.

The simple fact is that musicians today—in or out of orchestras—rarely play new music because they love what they play. In orchestras the music they play is chosen for them; when they play more or less by themselves they do indeed make choices, but the process, and the end result, are curiously the same. The availability of public and private grants, the possibility of pre-concert press coverage and post-concert critical reviews, the presence of in-personalities at any given moment of the new-music network, the desire to capture some mythical audience of the young: all these factors substitute for artistic judgment and artistic

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commitment—just another word, by the way, for love.

It is clear that music directors of the greatest American orchestras, just because they have so little commitment to the new music they feel they must play, increasingly require advisers in order to make the necessary decisions as to repertory. Some simply strive to play as little of it as they can possibly get away with. It is equally clear to me that the best young American instrumentalists still reserve their hearts for the traditionally successful pieces of the repertory. When they venture outside these cozy precincts, they do so in the great majority of cases for reasons, I must repeat, not of the heart, but of the head.

As a critic, I do not know, and I make no claim to knowing, what the new music is that musicians should love. I only ask that a commitment of what is so movingly called in our Declaration of Independence "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor" be the basis for choice, and that when musicians cannot themselves choose they ask from administrators the provision of a repertory that they can commit their lives to. As an administrator, I have tried to find for the musicians I work with already existent music that I feel they (and audiences) can love, if given a chance. So perhaps Mr. Fleischmann could say that it is indeed my love I am asking others to share; I accept this charge, and if that be autocracy, so be it.

And so we are left with Mr. Fleischmann's closing accusation: that I suspect "a power-hungry arts administrator [lurks] behind every proposal" for change. I am tempted to say that I only suspect such a phenomenon when the proposals come from those who give every evidence of being power-hungry arts administrators. As the manager of one of our highest budget orchestras, Mr. Fleischmann is a leader in his field. While his managerial colleagues across the country are perhaps not quite so well paid, he and they all command large bureaucracies—for example, there are now significantly more non-musicians than musicians paid, directly or indirectly, by our most important orchestras—and make fundamental decisions about American musical life. These administrators everywhere have shown great ability in amassing staffs, raising money, and inflating budgets—and keeping the world of large orchestral management within their own tight little circle.

But these are successes without benefit to music. The sad fact is that each passing year sees a decline in the vitality of American orchestras. This decline has been superintended by the masterful administrators of whom Mr. Fleischmann is a representative. It is time that their failure be recognized for what it is, and that musical decision-making be based on musical commitment, or, as I had the naïveté to call it in my September article, love.

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Cézanne's maxims

introduction by Bob Kirsch
translation by Joel Agee

It is well known that Paul Cézanne, though particularly wary of inappropriate appeals to theory, was nonetheless much given to formulating reflections as part of the practice of his own art. His letters, as well as his works themselves, demonstrate how positively he looked upon theory when it was correctly applied, and upon reason, "that clarity," he wrote, "that enables us to see into matters with which we are faced."

One of the sources of such reflections that tends to be overlooked is a volume entitled *Le dimanche avec Paul Cézanne: Souvenirs* ("Sundays with Paul Cézanne: Recollections"), which was published in 1925 and has not yet appeared in an English translation. The following forty-two maxims have been drawn from this book, and were previously recorded, according to its author, the poet Léo Larguier (1878-1950), in a handwritten manuscript by the painter's son, Paul Cézanne, Jr.

As anyone familiar with his letters may observe, Cézanne liked to compose theoretical statements in an aphoristic form. In 1858, when he was nineteen years old, he put "a huge collection of maxims from Horace, V. Hugo, etc.," as one of his friends described it, "on the walls of his room." Throughout his life, his letters were interspersed with citations from the Bible, great literature, and the observations of certain admired painters.

His remarks on painters and painting reflect his familiarity with the views of nineteenth-century painters (Delacroix, Corot, Courbet, Manet, and the Impressionists) and writers (Balzac, Baudelaire, Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, and Zola). Many examples of specific statements by Cézanne that either stem from or parallel those of these other artists might be presented.[1]

1 For example, aphorism IX resembles a passage in an open letter in which Courbet had written, "I maintain that art is completely individual . . . . I maintain, in addition, that painting is an essentially *concrete* art." XXII covers some of the same ground as Pissarro's statement, "We impressionists . . . have an altogether different concept of what it means to be inspired by the ancients. We ask nothing better than to be classics, but we want to achieve that in terms of our own experience." Aphorisms XXV, XXVIII, XXIX, and XXX are related to statements in Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece*, the hero of which Cézanne regarded with particular sympathy. XXVI is similar to these sentences from Baudelaire's "The Salon of 1846": "Color is thus the accord of two tones. Warmth and coldness of tone, in whose opposition all theory resides, cannot be defined in an absolute manner; they only exist in a relative sense." And Baudelaire writes of "the colorist's type of modeling, which is essentially different from that of the draughtsman" and elaborates upon this observation in passages that resemble XXV, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, and XXXII. However, there are multiple sources for such views. Particularly relevant is that Courbet, Pissarro, Balzac, and Baudelaire—like Cézanne—all looked to the theories and opinions of Delacroix.

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Nevertheless, the foundations of his views on the arts lie only partially within the nineteenth century.

Actually, Cézanne liked to read Virgil and Horace, and could cite lines from the works of each from memory. His knowledge of the history of art was thorough and well ordered. He studied older works of art in museums, and frequently made painted or drawn copies of what he saw. As an old man he related the history of painting and of painters to the young writer Louis Aurenche, and spoke with several young painters about the achievement of Renaissance and Baroque painters and sculptors. In fact, he was familiar with extensive passages of the biography of Michelangelo written in 1553 by Condivi, a biography supervised by the artist himself, and of the *Lives of the Artists* of 1568, Giorgio Vasari's history of the art of the Italian Renaissance—although it is unlikely that he could have identified the ultimate source of these passages when he read them in Stendhal's *History of Painting in Italy*. As Paul Arbelet showed in 1914, the *History* contains numerous unacknowledged paraphrases and translations from a variety of sources; this, however, would not have detracted from its usefulness to Cézanne. He knew the *History* well. He was re-reading it for the third time in 1878 when he recommended it to Zola; early in the 1900s, he recommended it to the young painter Charles Camoin.

It is interesting that Delacroix, whom Cézanne admired deeply, also liked Stendhal's *History*. The book would have demonstrated to Cézanne that artists of the Renaissance spoke and theorized about color and drawing, chiaroscuro and general tone, planes and modeling, contour and composition, gesture and proportion, perspective and geometry and beauty, as well as about the observation of nature, the study of the antique, and the expression of feeling. His own well-founded interest in these subjects is apparent from the following maxims and, even more so, from his works themselves. (Interestingly, before he painted the *Leda and the Swan* [1878-85], he had found in the *History* a paraphrase of Condivi's account of Michelangelo's depiction of this subject.)

Cézanne and Larguier knew one another fairly well. As a soldier stationed in the painter's hometown of Aix-en-Provence in 1901-02, the young poet frequently visited with the painter on Sundays. Cézanne, his wife, and his son (who was already friendly with Larguier) spent several days at Larguier's parents' house in the Cévennes during the autumn of 1902. Old painter and young poet corresponded thereafter.

Even if the following aphorisms are recorded entirely without error, and there is no guarantee that this is so, their numbering and arrangement are not Cézanne's. The scholar P. M. Doran has discovered evidence in Larguier's book on the painter of 1947 that it is possible, although not certain, that the poet himself had taken some notes in 1902 which Paul Cézanne, Jr., later completed. Whatever Larguier's role was, the printed text is that of the handwritten manuscript by Paul Cézanne, Jr. He was more familiar with Cézanne's thoughts than anyone else who has left a record of what the painter said, and this gives the transcription a particular value.

Joel Agee and I would like to acknowledge the excellent suggestions made by Nathan Gross on the translation.

—*B.K.*

I
The appreciation of art in criticism is formulated less according to the aesthetic evidence than on the basis of literary conventions.

II
The artist must flee literature in art.

III
Art is the revelation of an exquisite sensibility.

IV
Sensibility characterizes the individual; at its most perfect, it distinguishes the artist.

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V
A great sensibility is the condition most favorable to any beautiful conception of art.

VI
The most seductive element in art is the personality of the artist himself.

VII
The artist objectivizes his sensibility, his innate distinction.

VIII
Nobility of conception reveals to us the artist's soul.

IX
The artist concretizes and individualizes.

X
The artist experiences joy in being able to communicate to other souls his enthusiasm before the masterpiece of nature, whose secret he believes he possesses.

XI
Genius is the power of renewing one's emotion by contact with everyday life.

XII
For the artist, to see is to conceive and to conceive is to compose.

XIII
Because an artist does not set down his emotion as a bird modulates its sounds: he composes.

XIV
The importance of art is not to be observed in the universality of its immediate results.

XV
Art is a religion. Its aim is the elevation of thought.

XVI
He who does not have a taste for the absolute (perfection) is satisfied with a tranquil mediocrity.

XVII
One measures the excellence of minds by the originality with which they develop their conceptions.

XVIII
In making a work of art, the most precious collaborator of an artist's sensibility is an intelligence with great powers of organization.

XIX
Art is an adaptation of things to our needs and our tastes.

XX
The technique of an art carries with it a language and a logic.

XXI
An artistic formula is perfect when it is adequate to the character and the grandeur of the interpreted subject.

XXII
Style is not created by servile imitation of the masters; it develops out of the artist's own way of feeling and expressing himself.

XXIII
By the way an artistic conception is rendered, we may assess the artist's consciousness and the elevation of his mind.

XXIV
The pursuit of novelty and originality is a false need that poorly conceals banality or lack of temperament.

XXV
Line and modeling do not exist. Drawing is a relation of contrast or simply the relation of two colors, white and black.

XXVI
Light and shade are a relation of colors, the two principal accidents, different not by their general intensity but by their own particular sonority.

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XXVII
The form and contour of objects are given to us by the oppositions and contrasts that result from the objects' particular colorations.

XXVIII
Pure drawing is an abstraction. Drawing and color are in no way separable, since everything in nature has color.

XXIX
To the extent that one paints, one draws. Rightness of color simultaneously gives the light and modeling of the object. The more color attains harmony, the more the drawing approaches precision.

XXX
Contrasts and relations of colors—that is the whole secret of drawing modeled forms.

XXXI
Nature is deep.

Between the painter and his model, a plane is interposed: atmosphere.

Bodies seen in space are always convex.

XXXII
Atmosphere forms the immutable ground upon whose screen all the oppositions of color and all the accidents of light are decomposed. It constitutes the envelope of the painting while contributing to its synthesis and overall harmony.

XXXIII
One can therefore say that to paint is *to contrast.*

XXXIV
There is no such thing as bright painting or dark painting; there are only relations of color. When these are rightly arranged, harmony comes about all by itself. The more numerous and varied they are, the greater and more pleasing is the effect to the eye.

XXXV
Painting, like all art, involves technique, workmanlike manipulation, but the rightness of a color and the happy combination of effects depend on the artist's choice alone.

XXXVI
The artist does not directly perceive all the relations: he feels them.

XXXVII
Accurate feeling and complete realization produce style.

XXXVIII
Painting is the art of combining effects, that is, of establishing relations among colors, contours, and planes.

XXXIX
Method emerges from contact with nature.

It is developed by circumstances. It consists of seeking the expression of what one feels, of organizing sensations into a personal aesthetic.

XL
A priori, schools do not exist.

The question that precedes all others is that of art in itself. Painting, then, is either good or bad.

XLI
To observe nature is to bring out the character of one's model.

To paint does not mean to copy the subject in a servile manner: it is to seize a harmony among numerous relations, it is to transpose them into a scale of their own according to a new and original logic.

XLII
To make a painting is to compose . . .

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Poems *by Charles Tomlinson, Louis Simpson & Peter Davison*

Hudson River School

We drove to the river to see if the shad were rising
Down vistas the painters once flooded with Claudian gold:
The uncompleted spring was still dividing
Shadow-pied acres between the sun and cloud.

As the heat flushed through, you could feel the power of summer
Waiting to overtake the spring only half-begun:
'Where are the fishers?' we asked a woman there,
'You'll see them,' she said, 'once the shad are beginning to run.'

They were not running today here, and the lines
Casting infrequently out from coverts along the shore,
Were merely the first and desultory signs
Of what must turn fever and fervor as more and more

Shad thronged the channels—shad that once filled the fords
In such abundance, you could not ride through
Without treading on them. They have outlasted the herds
Of buffalo, the pigeon flocks that even the painters knew

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Only by hearsay, for their retrospective gold
Was painting a loss already. We turned to climb
Out of the valley: Van Winkle's mountains showed
Heaped massively up along the horizon line:

As the hills rose around us we began to see—
Only a few at first, then flare on flare
The blossoms that blew from the shadbush, tree on tree,
Whitening the crests in the currents of the air:

The shadblow that comes when the fish are coming
—Spring brings a yearly proof the legend is true—
Told plainly that plenitude could not be long
In reaching the valley to foison the river anew.

—*Charles Tomlinson*

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The rise

I fished out in the middle
and fished around the shore,
I fished all day and caught nothing . . .
only the creak of oarlocks
and the cry of a moorhen
and beat of geese flying over.

The next day Monaghan came
in his van. Joe's an artist
and one of the best fly-fishermen.
I said they ought to stock the lake.
No, he said, for the small fish
take everything. The big ones
grow despondent and lie on the bottom.

That night he took me out with him.
No rowing . . . he had an outboard motor.
We anchored off a point in the dark
and waited.

Around ten-thirty
the night came alive with splashes.
He stood and cast, lunging toward the sound.
The rise lasted for half an hour
and when the night was still again
he had caught three lovely fish.

Some day I'd like to go back
and hear the cry of a moorhen
and learn from that man how to fish.

—Louis Simpson

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White oxen

A man walks beside them
with a whip that he cracks.
The cart they draw is painted
with Saracens and Crusaders,
fierce eyes and ranks of spears.

They are on the steep road
that goes up the mountain.
Their neat-stepping hoofs
appear to be flickering
in the sun, raising dust.

They are higher than the roofs
on which striped gourds and melons
lie ripening. They move
among the dark green olives
that grow on the rocks.

They dwindle as they climb . . .
vanish around a corner
and reappear walking on the edge
of a precipice. They enter
the region of mist and darkness.

I think I can see them still:
a pair of yoked oxen
the color of ivory
or smoke, with red tassels,
in the gathering dusk.

—*Louis Simpson*

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Mother Church

Saint Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco:
to Belluschi, Nervi, Kepes, Lippold

With four feet planted on four standpoints
and cocked like a helmet, a shield, or a sacred heart,
she lifts the tonnage of her concrete roof
and levers it toward a soaring glassy crest—
sun-blaze, blood-blaze, leaf-blaze, sea-blaze.
She fuses four energies into a true cross
that filters shavings of outdoor daylight
down through the apse to a Shaker-table altar.

Overhead mounts a maze of honeycomb hexagons
as crazed as the salt plain where Lot's fool wife
turned her face homeward, sealed herself away.
Inside the shell, gathered from on high,
a blessing, glittering in a cloud of light,
collects above the core of worship.

This tabernacle lifts up all offerings—
stone, words, light, music—
into the cradleweight of mild Mother Church,
tenderly hoisted there by hands of men.

You who enter this sanctuary,
Whether to stand or kneel,
Take comfort from the mystery
Of dedicated artifice.

—Peter Davison

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Art

Photography and beyond

by Jed Perl

The absence of interesting contemporary photography may be one of the reasons why the photography boom of the Seventies, which had been focused on the achievements of the past, ultimately faded away. The young photographers never really demonstrated the relevance of the past to the present. And the dearth of engaging new talent left a vacuum that's been filled in the Eighties by a group of artists who take as their subject the public's lust for photographs while at the same time making it clear that their work isn't really photography at all. Cindy Sherman and Sherrie Levine, as well as more recent entrants onto the scene like the Starn Twins and Clegg & Guttmann, are far more knowing about the needs of the audience than any photographer who has emerged in the past quarter century. Indeed, these artists seem to be onto everything about photography—its romance, its place in modern culture—except the internal possibilities of the medium they've taken up. They use and abuse photographs; but their work isn't really in the spirit of photography, which is ultimately concerned with a way of seeing the world.

Doug and Mike Starn, the twins born in New Jersey in 1961 who show their photographs as the Starn Twins, had their first New York show in 1986, when the Stux Gallery, which represented them in Boston, opened its New York quarters on the corner of West Broadway and Spring. Like their later exhibits, that show included collages and wall displays made up of the Twins' fuzzy, stained, and over- and underexposed photographic prints. These are the kinds of prints that others might think are best left on the darkroom floor; the photographic paper is often creased and torn—it looks like it's been stored underfoot.

The Starn Twins' photographs represent such unexceptional items as a modern side chair, a piece of classical sculpture, or, in their 1987 show, a silhouette of two horses. These are the raw materials for wall works that range from a single image presented in a heavy, pompous molding to groups of pictures that are scotch-taped and tacked together into flimsy, sprawling abstract collage designs. The Twins' enthusiastic supporters view their works as utopian meditations on the ruins of technology. And when you first see this rundown image world, where everything is faded and melancholy, it's fetching, it's clever. But then it's just obvious; there's no intermediate experience, you're never engaged. The subject is nostalgia; but the work is a cheat because the images don't really fulfill their elusive themes—there are no hidden depths, no secrets to reveal. For die-hard art theorists the Starn Twins' work may illustrate some lesson about the collapse of capitalism; for the ordinary gallery-goer these are only fuzzy emblematic images that have a certain mysterious allure. Last spring, when the Twins were featured at the Whitney Biennial and one began to hear people singling them

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out for praise, it was probably simply because the work had the romantic seductiveness that soft-focus photography has had for a hundred years. This is a new type of gray and sepia décor, reminiscent of Deborah Turbeville's moldy photographs of fashion models in ruined palaces.

The Starn Twins are a perfect example of how artists nowadays achieve fame in New York. It seems to take approximately a year from initial exposure to major-museum apotheosis. Robert Pincus-Witten—an art critic who has the gossipy skills of an eighteenth-century courtier—has just published a monograph on the two twenty-six-year-olds.[1] Is it wrong to be a success when you're still so young? No, not at all; but it doesn't prove anything, either.

In the face of a gallery scene saturated with photographic imagery, the persistence in the museums of separate departments of photography begins to seem like a holdover from an earlier age. By now everyone has made up their minds about photography one way or the other, and the kind of special pleading for the significance of photographs that photography departments specialize in is plainly irrelevant. When Peter Galassi, the very sharp curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, observes in the catalogue of the new show "Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Early Years"[2] that the Frenchman's work between 1932 and 1934 comprises "one of the great concentrated episodes in modern art," he sounds rather old-fashioned. Who wants to hear any more of those aggressive-defensive arguments for the importance of camera art?

The best section of Galassi's Cartier-Bresson essay is devoted to a biographical study of Cartier-Bresson's early years (he was born in 1908)—the years when he was just coming to photography, and making his way through the international bohemia of Paris and New York. Here Galassi writes very much one-bright-young-man-to-another, and catches something of the youthful amused inventiveness of the period when Cartier-Bresson met Harry and Caresse Crosby, Julien Levy, Jean Renoir, and ventured across three continents, snapping pictures along the way. Galassi believes that the photographs Cartier-Bresson took in the Thirties are one of the purest expressions of a Surrealist sensibility in photography, and Galassi very much wants to isolate Cartier-Bresson's early work from his later career as a sort of journalist. Galassi argues his case with considerable delicacy, but I can't believe that anyone who has thought very much about Cartier-Bresson ever imagined there wasn't a Surrealist element in the work of the man who invented "the decisive moment." Cartier-Bresson's immortal images are sprinkled throughout his career—early and late. Much of Galassi's essay seems to come down to an argument within the photography world—specifically, to a quarrel with the curators over at New York's International Center for Photography, who are very much photojournalism-oriented and mounted a large Cartier-Bresson show in 1979. Galassi may be more tied down than he himself imagines to the old closed world of photography, with its interminable arguments about journalism versus art, and straight photography versus the manipulated image.

Though Galassi has gone to the trouble of

1 *The Starn Twins,* by Robert Pincus-Witten; Burton Skira Publishers, 148 pages, 55 color plates, $25.

2 "Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Early Work" was on display at the Museum of Modern Art from September 10 through November 29. From there it travels to the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts (December 15 to February 7, 1988), the Art Institute of Chicago (February 27 to April 16), the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego (May 10 to June 26), the Danforth Museum of Art in Framingham, Massachusetts (September 25 to November 28), the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (December 17 to February 26, 1989), and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa (March 31 to May 28, 1989). The exhibition was organized by Peter Galassi, who also wrote the catalogue, which was published by the Museum of Modern Art/New York Graphic Society Books (152 pages, $35).

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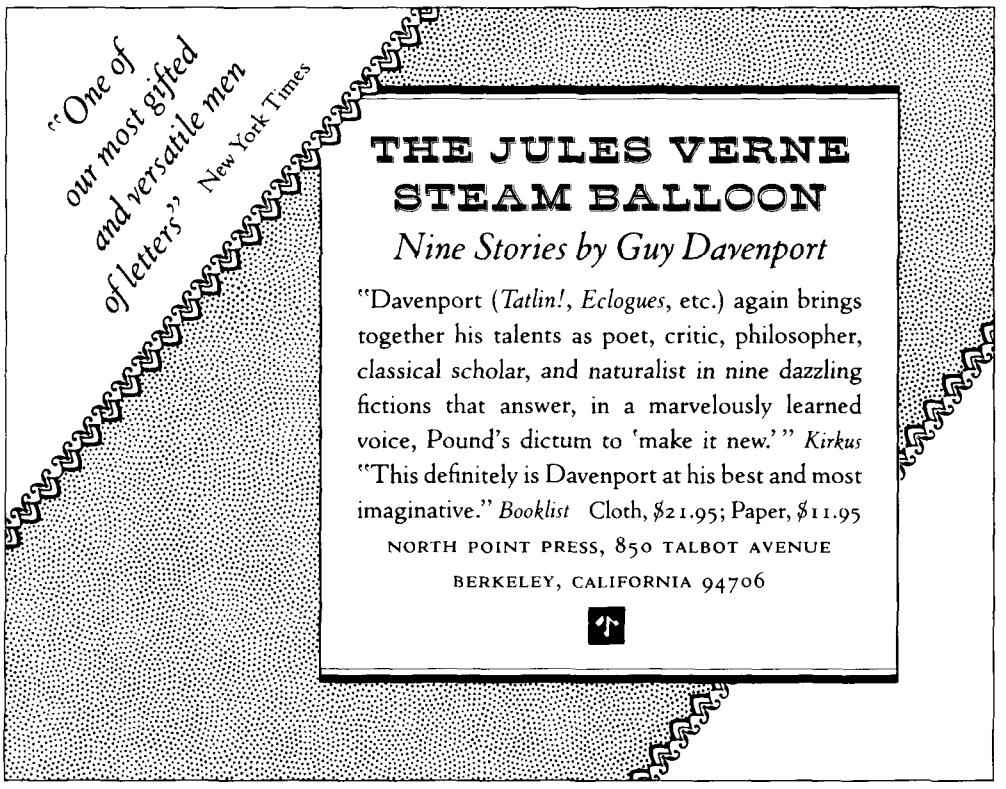
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including four of Cartier-Bresson's early paintings in the show, in the catalogue he makes short shrift of Cartier-Bresson's work as a moderate Cézannesque landscape painter and of his studies in the Twenties with the academic Cubist André Lhote. From the two examples of paintings done under Lhote's influence that Galassi includes, Lhote's teachings seem to have had a deleterious effect on Cartier-Bresson's painting, at least in the short run—his work became less spontaneous, more schematic. Galassi knows that Lhote wasn't taken seriously by his legendary contemporaries—they hated his academic formulas; but Galassi misses, I believe, the extent to which Lhote's post-Cubist gloss on traditional easel painting resounds through Cartier-Bresson's work. (Galassi is probably unaware that some contemporary artists still find Lhote's *Treatise on Landscape Painting* a good guide to the place of classic pictorial construction in a modern pictorial world.) While there can be no question that the output of 1932-1934 offered at MOMA is less expansive about human nature than the photographer's later work, most of Cartier-Bresson's experimentation with the tiny Leica camera reflects a search for quirky variations on the old formulas of landscape art. Cartier-Bresson's odd croppings, overwhelming foregrounds, closed-up middle grounds, and flat, too-close backgrounds can be read as a series of tricks and surprising reversals played on the old normative sense of landscape space. Taken as a whole, Cartier-Bresson's work has a lofty, generalizing tone that separates it from the more picturesque effects of, say, André Kertesz, and this tone probably has something to do with a characteristically French taste for the well-constructed image. The point isn't that Cartier-Bresson was depending upon Lhote, any more than he was depending upon André Breton or Louis Aragon; only that in Cartier-Bresson the Surrealist taste for surprise is cut with something of French classicism. According to Galassi, Cartier-Bresson saw Lhote shortly before his old teacher's death in 1962. Cartier-Bresson recalls this comment of

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Lhote's: "Everything comes from your formation as a painter."

Given the close connection that Cartier-Bresson has always maintained with the past of landscape painting it's not really surprising that in the Seventies, when he pretty much ceased taking photographs, he took to drawing in pencil and pen, and to making paintings on paper in gouache. When the drawings were first shown at the Carlton Gallery in New York in 1975 the artist's old friend Julien Levy (who had first shown the photographs in New York in 1933) regarded Cartier-Bresson's drawings as another kind of approach to the artist's continuing exploration of the world *out there*. Levy said that Cartier-Bresson had moved from images that "stopped reality" (photographs) to images made of a "questing line." A selection of Cartier-Bresson's paintings and drawings was mounted at the Arnold Herstand Gallery on Fifty-seventh Street to coincide with the MOMA show this past fall; but the opportunity to compare the artist early and late, as photographer and "drawer," was one that few critics in New York seemed to want to take up. For those anxious to demonstrate that Cartier-Bresson's early photographs are a high point of high modernism the nineteenth-century mood of his current work may have seemed an embarrassment.

Cartier-Bresson isn't a complete figure as a draftsman or as a painter. His output seems to be that of a gifted amateur; it doesn't have a clear shape or direction; he isn't driven the way painters are. Still, the best of his drawings—which are the least worked up ones, the views of the Tuileries Gardens, where the thick and nobby pencil lines give substance to the bare branches of the chestnut trees—are understandable as products of the same voracious eye that gave us the photographs in Cartier-Bresson's famous picture books, *The Decisive Moment* (1952) and *The Europeans* (1955). The gouaches carry the sketchiness of the drawings into full color (and also bring Cartier-Bresson full circle to the intimacy of his first Cézannesque oils). One winter scene of the Tuileries recalls Marquet's great Parisian oils in its vision of urban architecture under a blanket of snow. When Cartier-Bresson's drawings are more fully worked up, with an increase in detail and middle tones, they begin to lose their overall force; his best drawings are "fast," like his photographs. The show at Herstand ranged from still lifes to figures and interiors and left one with the sense of a warm, unprepossessing intelligence coming to terms with the things that lay all around. In his drawings and paintings, as in his photographs, Cartier-Bresson uses the medium transparently—as a window through which we see the world.

In returning to the plein-air painting past of French art, Cartier-Bresson is also in a way asserting a link to the nineteenth-century world out of which photography originally emerged. And as it happens, the show in New York early in the fall where one came closest to Cartier-Bresson's spirit of generous curiosity wasn't a photography exhibit at all; it was the show of landscape painting and drawings (and a few sculptures) by the forty-six-year-old painter Stanley Lewis, at the Bowery Gallery in October. This was Lewis's first solo appearance in New York in six years. (In the past he's shown at the Green Mountain Gallery—and in its later incarnation, the Blue Mountain Gallery; he's also exhibited at Gross McCleaf in Philadelphia, and in Kansas City, where for many years he taught at the Art Institute.) Lewis handles the artist's materials as brilliantly as anyone working in America today. The paint rises off the surface in thick strokes and gloppy coagulations; but amazingly the ultimate effect is light, elegant, clear. Lewis's landscapes, with their pearly grays and surprising range of greens, have a subtle, shining beauty. Like Cartier-Bresson, Lewis is attentive to the scrappy, surprising, and odd elements of the world around us. This artist, too, can make the ordinary extraordinary.

In at least one landscape of Northampton, Massachusetts (where Lewis now teaches at Smith College), a remarkable artist reaches the high point of his career so far. In this New England vista the snowy tracks of earth

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and the cozy familiarity of a little town become the raw ingredients for a precisely pitched lyric poem. The paint handling and general form-sense here—and in many of Lewis's paintings—may recall the work of the Englishman Frank Auerbach; but Lewis's landscapes are more fully realized than any of the three dozen or so Auerbachs I've seen in New York. Painting from an elevated viewpoint, scanning the scene below him, Lewis takes it all in with a serene yet passionate concentration. He knows his American buildings and trees and vistas as well as Morandi knew his Italian ones. And in this show he finally begins to resolve a problem that he's had over the years with his foregrounds. Too often the big close-up trees and bushes have been a blur in Lewis's paintings—a blur we rush around to get at the interesting details in the distance. I've heard artists say that Lewis's vague foregrounds are a reminiscence of the hours he and all the rest of us spend driving through the American landscape, with our eyes trained on the distance. And this may explain the indecisive foreground as a motif. But structurally the foregrounds have weakened many of Lewis's finest paintings—up until this show, where in a number of canvases he at last knits the front together with all the rest.

Everything in Lewis's show was felt to the same high degree. If much of it didn't ultimately succeed, it was a question of a kind of large failure that we rarely encounter in the galleries nowadays, where "good" painting usually means "safe" painting. Lewis never plays it safe. Two mural-scale works (roughly eight by ten feet) are abstracted from a series of drawings of figures sitting in some sort of public place, perhaps a bus station. (The motif contains just the sort of interesting intermingling of figures and architecture that has caught Cartier-Bresson's attention from time to time.) These large works are related to the even bigger painting based on the entrance to the Columbus Circle subway station that Lewis exhibited at the Green Mountain Gallery in 1976. Now, as then, what's missing is some fundamental idea of abstract structure that can replace the perspectival space which the artist loses as he flattens everything out. Lewis might seem to be moving in the direction of the jostling forms of Léger's *City*; but unlike Louisa Matthiasdottir, who in her great *Vesturgata* cityscape of 1980 managed to reconsider nature after Léger, Lewis makes flat painting the same as spaceless painting. When he abstracts a sky area, the amplitude of natural space is reduced to a wedge of color—an arbitrary design element. Lewis's big paintings are honest failures; but they're such exquisitely painted failures that some observers may think they're empty elegance and nothing more. I see in them a bumbling romance with the idea of abstract art. Something similar lies behind the four sculptures in the show, rather academic cubistic experiments in stone, with a woman sitting amidst some sort of architecture. Lewis doesn't yet understand abstraction as a world unto itself—sometimes I doubt that he ever will—so when he wipes out all the interesting picturesque details of modern suburban America he has nothing to offer in their place.

Stanley Lewis's landscape paintings, which combine a nineteenth-century loyalty to perception with a twentieth-century reach toward abstraction, bring us back to the point around the turn of the century when landscape painting—at the hands of Monet and Cézanne and Matisse—was leading, almost in spite of itself, into abstraction. Cartier-Bresson's paintings and drawings are in part documents of a great Frenchman's continuing interest in the naturalistic impulses of nineteenth-century art which did so much to create a climate receptive to the ultimate naturalism of photography. (As it happens, the first major exhibition that Peter Galassi organized at MOMA was the 1981 "Before Photography," which examined exactly this relationship between painting and photography in early nineteenth-century Europe.) Both landscape photography and abstraction are in certain respects outgrowths of the shattering of traditional compositional practices that were inaugurated by the early nine-

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teenth-century plein-air landscape painters. And just as the idea of painting in the direct presence of nature had its origins in the radical romanticism of the early nineteenth century, so photography and abstraction were grounded in a revolutionary vision that no academy could accommodate.

When photography became central to the art scene of the 1970s it was in part because photography was—and remains—an untraditional and even an anti-traditional vehicle for high art. But the deeper appeal of photography has always rested in its being a visual medium through which our responses to the world can be expressed directly. Representational art, which was reaching a new audience in the Seventies, was a different kind of response to a similar need; and it wasn't uncommon for artists and collectors and dealers who were interested in photography to also be interested in the new representational painting. The excitement that gallery-goers felt in front of photographs suggested that aesthetic feeling might be closer to ordinary feeling than was often believed. And this in turn highlighted the extent to which a late modern aesthetic that denied the value of human feeling was insupportable. What's wrong with the Starn Twins is that in their work (to quote Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum) "the medium is the message." With the Starn Twins the tearing and defacing of photographs is an act committed against a medium which is basically viewed as inert, inexpressive. For Henri Cartier-Bresson, both as a photographer and as a painter and draftsman, the medium is, as I said earlier, transparent. So with Stanley Lewis, whose brilliance as a paint-handler has to do with his belief that the picture surface must be as natural as nature itself.

In a recent issue of *Artforum,* the French painter André Masson, who died in October at the age of ninety-one, was asked what advice he would give to young painters today. He answered, "I don't know what to say. I don't think of painting by itself—for me, painting and culture are inseparable." What marvelous advice for painters young and old. And, if you substitute "photography" for "painting," for photographers young and old, too.

ANDRE MASSON

Paintings and Works on Paper
December-January

Bronze Sculpture and Related Drawings
January-February

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Zurbarán, for the most part

by Creighton Gilbert

After El Greco and Velázquez, Zurbarán is generally accepted as the third greatest painter of Spain in its great painting age, about 1575-1675. Of the other plausible candidates, Ribera is apparently disqualified for emigrating (an immigrant, like El Greco, is all right) and because he alone focused on earthy facts, with respect to both visual appearances and social references. What is wanted evidently is something a bit grand and also distanced. Murillo did get on the list in the Victorian period, with Velázquez and Zurbarán, but now he seems too Victorian by far; his beggar boys and immaculate virgins alike seem sugary, though it could well happen that a select list of his driest works could re-emerge in postmodern taste. They are also his most personal, and it was perhaps his assistants who heaped on the sugar in their repeat versions of his subjects.

Yet Zurbarán's third is a very distant one. He is unknown to much of the public that is knowledgeable about Velázquez and deeply so about El Greco. So he is the right candidate for the large one-man show which was installed in the Metropolitan in New York in September, and which will afterwards be seen in Paris.[1] It sets up a lot of questions, some of them awkward, but their presence is in large part the cost of the exhibition's virtues. It is a standard kind of serious assemblage of an old master who is well worth emphasizing in this way. The show covers the whole span of his career, from his first recorded work in 1626, when he was twenty-eight (his education and youthful work are not known from anything that survives, and the catalogue, typically, does not try much to dig into this hard problem), to 1662, two years before he died. With seventy works in New York (sixty-seven in Paris), it also shows all the kinds of paintings he produced. I can think of only one absent picture whose inclusion would have widened our sense of his capacities, and it belongs to a museum that never lends, the Gardner in Boston. This is a grand full-length portrait of a man in a colorful academic gown.

"Zurbarán" contains just one portrait, impressive but peculiar, and exceptionally plain among the artist's works as to color. It represents a twelve-year-old scion of a great family who had been given military titles from the time he was five; he is offered in the picture as a solemn fake adult. Zurbarán's work, certainly, is on religious themes in

1 "Zurbarán" opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on September 22 and will be on display until December 13. From there it travels to the Grand Palais, Paris, where it will be on view from January 14 through April 11, 1988. The exhibition was organized by Philippe de Montebello and coordinated by Walter Liedke. A catalogue entitled *Zurbarán*, by Jeannine Baticle of the Louvre, containing essays by Yves Bottineau, Jonathan Brown, and Alfonso E. Perez-Sanchez as well as by Mme. Baticle, has been published by Abrams (334 pages, $45).

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great part, but the show takes that ratio even further by under-representing other categories as well as portraiture. It lacks his unique signed still life, the Lemons and Oranges of the Norton Simon Gallery in Pasadena, though the catalogue calls this picture a "stunning work," sharing the general admiration for it. The only still life shown, from Barcelona, is noted as one of two almost identical pictures by the artist, of which the other is "considered to be of superior quality." It is natural to wonder why that one is not here, since its owner, the Prado, did lend to the show, and the chance to compare two such versions is a standard benefit of this type of exhibition. We are left to see Zurbarán's still-life work in what seems to be the third choice, though such work is also evident, of course, in marvelous details in other paintings. (One of the most entrancing details is the row of tiny bells sewed on the hem of a priest's robe in a Circumcision; the heavy folds of the robe give the shiny spots a deft, shifting syncopation in their rhythm.) The Barcelona still life is hung rather inconspicuously, which surely would not have happened with the Norton Simon one, which is more aggressive in modeling as well as in color than this series of shadowed earth tones.

These deficiencies may well have been unavoidable, but that hardly seems to apply in a third case. This involves Zurbarán's secular narrative paintings, the series of the labors of Hercules which (along with two battles) he did for a palace of King Philip IV, the monarch whose reign (1621-1665) exactly bracketed Zurbarán's career—a suggestive juxtaposition also not explored in the catalogue. The exhibition presents just one of these pictures, and it is hard to find, for it is the only painting in the entire show that is skied, by being hung above a door. A justification can be offered that it was so placed in its original installation. Yet the same argument is waived for several religious works in the show that were originally hung even higher. (We learn about the original hanging from the admirably attentive reconstructions which the catalogue features.) There are reasons for the waivers in these cases, but one could surely have been found for the Hercules, too. Apparently the designer of the exhibition shared the view of a major French critic, quoted in the catalogue, that the subject was "not very well suited" to the artist. The two museum directors in their preface seem to agree, saying that the one painting of the set seen here is the best of the lot because it does not call for much nudity, something that "was not Zurbarán's forte." We are not allowed to judge his efforts in that line, and the weight of the claim seems reduced by the inclusion of some distinctly inferior religious pictures; the *New York Times* reviewer found a "number of uninspired and even embarrassing paintings" and so did I. However one judges this, a particular view of Zurbarán is being offered.

"Zurbarán" addresses strongly both of the two points of conventional wisdom that always come up about the artist. One is that after a brilliant start he declined in quality through his later years. Not surprisingly for specialists doing a full retrospective, the makers of the show reject this thesis, with partial success, though they confirm an analogous pattern in his career. The other, related point is about his modernity. Early in the catalogue caution is urged, when it is reasonably observed that "it would be misleading to make too much of references to Cubist and other reductive interpretations of visual experience" encouraged by people like Christian Zervos. Yet later, coming dangerously close to art appreciation's easy devices, it tells us that a painting can be taken "as [a work] of modern art, by leaving aside the subject matter and considering only the colors, the volumes . . . and the handling." This would have surprised even Zervos, Picasso's cataloguer, who said the essence of Zurbarán was human truth, citing his saints and monks and their desire to approach God. It is even more startling to set this formalist reading beside that of one of the great figures in the rediscovery of Zurbarán in the romantic period, the

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English traveller Richard Ford. He praised the St. Francis that is now in London's National Gallery by saying that it realizes the way Spanish monks actually look and is "an absolute daguerreotype" of such men. Written in 1853, Ford's is one of the earliest texts to praise any painting by likening it to photography. The romantics were the first to love Zurbarán, especially in France, and King Louis Philippe, of all people, must rank as the greatest Zurbarán collector of all time. An agreeable catalogue essay on the artist's reputation is limited to France, and so Ford is omitted.

Certainly France was the scene of Zurbarán's greatest effect on other artists, especially well known in the case of Manet. Gautier, remembered today for popularizing the notion of art for art's sake, also wrote a long poem that is invariably quoted in discussions of the artist's fame. "To Zurbarán" addresses the monks in the paintings: "What crimes do you expiate with such remorse, tonsured phantoms, sallow executioners?" Written in 1840, the poem is part of the image of Spain that was also producing Edgar Allan Poe's allusions to the horrific thrills of the Spanish Inquisition. Though the poem is like Ford in assuming that the paintings provide a transparently true report about monasteries, Gautier's aestheticism suggests how Manet could have found purely optical models in Zurbarán. Wall labels in this exhibition cite Manet, and when one walks out to the permanent Metropolitan galleries and sees the glorious row of Manets, a label there correspondingly invokes Zurbarán as a source. Yet even though these pictures are full of Spanish costumes, it is not so easy to spot a visual trace of Zurbarán's impact; Manet's figures, like Velázquez's, are too flexible and fleshy for Zurbarán. To be sure, in their time, Manet's figures seemed to academic taste shockingly flat and cardboardy, and that would have been enough to bring up Zurbarán's name. But nowadays the direct comparison seems to urge an almost opposite conclusion.

For it is true that the early Zurbaráns

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especially are almost "Cubist" in the sense that they are geometric and immobile, indeed without life. This static and frozen brightness of planes seems most odd in an art whose themes are usually narrative dramas, in the almost invariable Renaissance tradition. Not surprisingly, the three or four pictures in the show singled out most often for admiration are just the ones where, by exception, the theme becomes compatible with remoteness from any activity. Most of all, a work from the splendid baroque collection of the museum in Hartford, Connecticut, seems to have risen to the top as the masterpiece and anthology piece most frequently turning up in talk and in large reproductions, in reviews and official handouts alike. Its single figure is an obscure monk, Serapion, in the white robe of his order. He was martyred by being hung by the wrists from ropes and having his neck partially cut through, among other tortures typical of medieval saints' legends. What we see, against a neutral dark ground, is a frontal form dominated by a plane of folded stiff white cloth. It hangs as if from a clothesline, close to the front plane and cut off at the bottom. All that emerges, at the top, is the two limp hands and the lolling head, fixed as if forever. To me the closest analogue for it, startlingly, is a painting of 1825, the masterpiece of the American painter Raphaelle Peale. Called *After the Bath,* it represents a sheet hanging from a line, with one of the bather's hands emerging above. Both artists, starting with a single upright figure in shadow, metamorphize it into something apparently less, a still life, "Cubist" not only in geometry but in the strong projection of irregular planes meeting at points. Peale's references can be seen as ambivalent between a striptease and an artist's protest against the prohibition of nudes, Zurbarán's as ambivalent between two deeper things, the titillation of the cruel and a record of the readiness to die for belief. He retains the traditional sense of an icon of a saint for our meditation in church, and indeed the still white shape makes an unusually powerful one, with Giottesque reduction to the simplest unity of mass. When this painting emerged from an English country house (the common story with Zurbaráns), it went to a well-known dealer who had it for four years before Hartford bought it in 1951, during which time, presumably, larger museums passed it up. They probably thought it was too unpleasant, but in the show some of the works they chose are less impressive.

Another powerful impression in a context of narration without life or motion is in a late St. Francis in Ecstasy. A legend tells how the saint died while rapt in prayer, and his body remained in its upright pose. The image showing this, a kind of mummy with worshipping gaze, appealed not at all to the nuns who owned it in the eighteenth century; they removed it from view as "a frightening object." The catalogue cover shows the St. Francis from London admired by Ford. Here, the face is shadowed inside a deep hood, revealing only the big projecting bright nose and the black hole of the mouth. In all the rest of the painting what we are left to inspect is a dominant textile, a gray and brown set of patches, out at elbow; they form big rectangles seen on a diagonal. Even a two-figure painting can show the effect of lifeless narration. A saint, kneeling and leaning forward in an undefined space reduced to a brushy surface (the most directly Manet-like effect), has a vision of another saint. This second one, on a parallel diagonal, is St. Peter on his cross, upside down as the legend requires; he seems to have slid down to a stop in front of the other, whose look fixes him in place. The two are both ambiguously real in their skilled modeling and visionary in their total displacement; taken together, they are a similarly detached object-set for our vision.

By contrast, Zurbarán is silly in presenting a scene where people must show a sudden, startled physical reaction; they are jointed puppets. Perhaps concerned to cope with this problem, in his later work he changes drastically to a much more usual Baroque effect, where female saints are gently sweet and surfaces are cushiony. Most of the artist's modern admirers have been unhappy

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with this, and it gets involved with the issue of his use of assistants. Certainly he has got a bad name from the lesser competence of many late works, and some earlier ones, where these helpers would seem to have been at work. The catalogue has not much to say about this distinction in the exhibited works, and seems to claim them all as his. The slightness of any such explorations is suggested in the case of an Immaculate Conception, which is described as an "enchanting" work of "Zurbarán's hands." Only in an introduction to the set to which it belongs is it pointed out in passing that it is hard to "determine the extent of Zurbarán's direct participation in the series." That is the only allusion to the picture's being arguably a really bad shop piece.

The change in painting style has a problematic relation to the artist's move from Seville to Madrid. This suggests questions that the catalogue does not answer. Was Madrid the cosmopolitan center as against provincial Seville, as implied by Velázquez's similar move when he was still young? Or was Seville the economic center of trade, especially with America, against Madrid's limitation to a consuming royal court—New York to Madrid's Washington? To be sure, Zurbarán did not work for commercial Seville at all; most of his clients were the city's monasteries, although these were indeed made prosperous by gifts of the secular rich. Another question arises. How does Zurbarán's change in painting style relate to the emergence of a younger successful artist in Seville, Murillo? The likeness to Murillo in Zurbarán's late work is undeniable, but did Zurbarán perhaps arrive at this effect independently and at the same time? Recalling fights over dates of Gorkys and Kupkas, the catalogue points to a shift in the dating of an Annunciation in Philadelphia, certainly one of the most elegant and even astringent of these later Zurburáns. It is not of 1658 but of 1650; that is only very shortly after Murillo had defined himself. But this does not really reverse the historical implication that the young Murillo may have

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affected Zurbarán, for a rapid response by the older master may well be psychologically a more likely scenario than a slow one.[2]

There is another reason why many observers seem to disapprove of Zurbarán's changed approach. The early work with all those geometric monks is thought of as the "real" Zurbarán, they tell us, because he was himself devout. The same *Times* reviewer infers that he was "a man of faith," and, in a more complicated conflation with the latest variant on art for art's sake, decides that "Zurbarán clearly believed then that something happened in the act of painting—some transmutation in which matter was suddenly inhabited by something beyond matter—and that this transmutation was proof of the faith he represented." It is really most implausible that Zurbarán theorized about the act of painting at all, much less associated it with something comparable to the transubstantiation of the host in a Mass, and the conclusion about his own piety is a surprisingly simple tribute to the artist as "sincere." There is no external evidence, it seems, about Zurbarán's personal religious attitudes. One is taught caution by the case of the Renaissance artist who produced perhaps the most pious looking paintings of his time, Perugino, but who was reported by a collateral descendant, also a painter, to have refused confession on his deathbed because he was curious to see what would happen in the other world without it. Our information about Zurbarán is dominated by numbers. A popular French essayist is quoted in the catalogue as saying that Spain means asceticism and therefore Zurbarán "is Spain itself," but this hardly seems compatible with the artist's three marriages and at least ten children, fathered up to the age of fifty-seven. More startling is the quantity of commissioned work, with contracts to do twenty-one paintings in eight months and thirty-four in a year. (Most of these pictures remain untraced; the catalogue does not pursue this puzzle much. Rather than assigning them to a vast workshop, one might consider that many never got done. It would be a case with many parallels.) Zurbarán, from the little we know, had the biographical profile of a hard worker, hustling to get ahead, ready to accommodate the client's expressive desires. He modified his approach for the king's Hercules series, and in his late art, as seems to be accepted. Why might he not have behaved in a similar way in the case of the early works commissioned by the monasteries, at the time when he also arranged with well-placed contacts to bypass the guild process in order to be able to settle in Seville? If Zurbarán's art is less a daguerreotype of his personal beliefs than an evocation of varying attitudes in his culture, it would make him a typical artist of his age and no less admirable a master for that.

2 The catalogue reports that the earlier date of 1650 was "discovered" by the writer of a book on Zurbarán in the 1970s, and also praises a previous Zurbarán scholar for having suspected it was earlier. This date, however, inscribed on the painting, was duly reported well before the 1970s, perhaps more than fifty years before, in a logical place, the published catalogues of the Philadelphia collection. They are not cited here. It is merely the specialist Zurbarán literature that only learned of it later. The writer in the 1970s claimed no such discovery, saying merely that the wrong later date was "usually" mentioned. This is a token of the limitations of exhibition catalogues as an imperfect vehicle of scholarship, affected by deadlines and other problems, and explains why they are not regarded in the discipline as full equivalents of scholarly research books and articles.

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Dance

Martha Graham carries on

by Eva Resnikova

From the very beginning of the Martha Graham Dance Company's three-week season at City Center in October, the Graham phenomenon threatened to overshadow the art. At ninety-three, Martha Graham contains within herself the entire history of one of the few truly indigenous American art forms. Apart from a few years in the early Seventies, following her belated and personally traumatic retirement as a performer, she has always been around; and if her controversial new fundraising scheme works—bypassing the National Endowment for the Arts and appealing directly to Congress for a four-million-dollar, one-time appropriation—she always will be.

Yet it is fashionable among a certain sector of the dance-critical community to act as if Graham and company no longer exist. These critics began to show their disdain in the late Seventies by attending performances and complaining about them in print; then they continued to attend performances but stopped writing about them; then they stopped attending performances and continued not writing about them (which, I suppose, is better than not attending performances and writing about them). In any case, the recent season was treated by these critics as if it were not happening, and the premiere of the choreographer's 177th ballet was conspicuously avoided in order to emphasize its status as a non-event.

For those who did choose to follow the Graham company's recent season, things got off to a rousing start with a gala benefit performance featuring guest appearances by three Soviet ballet superstars: Mikhail Baryshnikov and Rudolf Nureyev in *Appalachian Spring* and Maya Plisetskaya in *The Incense,* a miniature by Ruth St. Denis, Graham's earliest mentor. (This apparently marked the first time that an active member of a Soviet dance troupe has shared the stage with defectors.) The aging prima ballerina made this bit of 1906 Orientalia her own—in other words, there was no attempt at "authenticity," whatever that might mean in relation to a solo devised for the divine Miss Ruth by herself. Plisetskaya, with her snake arms and bourrées on high half-pointe, was a temple dancer straight out of *La Bayadère*; and, for my money, this approach worked better than the dedicated later efforts of the Graham company soloists, who took the whole thing seriously. (What we could have done without in the Russian ballerina's performance were her bad manners, egged on by a highly vocal contingent of Maya fans in the balcony, during the curtain calls: whereas Nureyev and Baryshnikov respectfully knelt before Miss Graham and laid their bouquets at her feet, Plisetskaya upstaged the nonagenarian choreographer by waving hers triumphantly in the air.)

The forty-nine-year-old Nureyev has been offering his increasingly wayward interpretation of the Revivalist preacher in *Appalachian Spring* for some time now, but he seemed particularly sullen on this occasion,

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probably owing to his having to share the spotlight with a compatriot ten years his junior in the more glamorous role. Baryshnikov, essaying the Husbandman for the first time, brought to the role a touching conviction, as well as an evident willingness to subjugate his balletic virtuosity and superstar persona to the demands of Graham's artistry.

Baryshnikov has said that he has plans to study the Graham technique systematically and has lent his support to the company's fundraising efforts. Though Graham might appear to represent an alien aesthetic to these classically trained Russians, one can see what it is about her theater that attracts them, namely, dramatic intensity. For a virtuoso like Baryshnikov, moreover, who has gone about as far as it is possible to go in ballet, there is also the challenge of mastering new technical demands that in some respects go beyond those of the classical ballet. Much to his credit, Baryshnikov has not asked for permission for American Ballet Theatre, which he heads, to perform *Appalachian Spring*. A.B.T. has already tackled the second-generation moderns Taylor and Cunningham, the post-moderns Tharp and Armitage, and is about to join the Mark Morris fan club; but Baryshnikov wisely understands the need for more specialized training before subjecting his corps de ballet girls to knee bourrées.

Nureyev, on the other hand, has been after this piece of quintessential Americana for his Paris Opéra Ballet for years, and his participation in the gala could have been based on his hope for a quid pro quo. It was apparently his belief that Miss Graham and her company's general director had reneged on a promise to give it to him that led the tempestuous Tartar to dump a glass of water on the latter's head at the supper at the Hotel Pierre following the performance. The gossip columnists had a field day, and Miss Graham felt compelled to respond with an exculpatory letter to "Suzy" of the *Post*.

Temperament aside, the artistic high point of the gala was the screening of a study film of Graham performing her solo *Frontier* made shortly after the work's creation in 1935, to which the conductor Jonathan McPhee has added a soundtrack of Louis Horst's score. As Graham points out in a program note, the film was never intended for public viewing. But whatever technical flaws she may perceive in the recording process and in her performance, it was a revelation to the audience. Here was a light and lyrical Graham of resplendent femininity, her movements beautifully modulated, far removed from the stereotyped "weight" for lack of which her current, ballet-trained dancers are so often reproved by the aforementioned critics.

This season's revivals were *Canticle for Innocent Comedians,* from 1952, with which Graham was evidently unhappy and pulled before I was able to see it, and *Celebration,* not performed since 1937. The very revival of this 1934 work was a bravura act, since there were no records other than Barbara Morgan's famous photographs and the fifty-year-old memories of surviving members of Graham's early all-girl Group. Performed by members of the Ensemble, composed of advanced students from the school, *Celebration* was a delight. This exuberant romp for twelve hardy girls to Horst's spare score, orchestrated for the occasion by McPhee, is a supreme test of aerobic ability, with its long passages of unrelieved jumping. Often the jumps are done simply with the legs together, pogo-stick style; there are also jumping jacks and a sort of saut de chat, as well as swaying movements, leaning poses, walks on the heels, lifts, and falls.

But whereas the joyful *Celebration* still works, Graham's early tragic pieces from this period seem not to have aged as gracefully. Her famous solo *Lamentation,* from 1930, a dance of anguish and mourning performed by a seated figure encased in a tube of stretch fabric, actually elicited laughs from the audience at one performance I attended. The 1929 *Heretic,* with its silent-movie piano accompaniment and simplistically spelled-out theme of sensitive outsider felled by unfeeling philistines, could

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almost be mistaken for a parody of Graham's "long woolen underwear" period (which Fanny Brice spoofed in the Ziegfeld Follies in her *Rewolt*). Other of Graham's ballets in current repertory remain of their time yet do not strike us as old-fashioned. Just as Balanchine's *La Valse,* with its Dior "New Look" tutus, is happily stuck firmly in 1951, Graham's *Embattled Garden* is quintessential 1958 *moderne.* Its Noguchi free-form Garden of Eden platform and spindly Tree of Knowledge could be a coffee table and pole lamp from any suburban household of the time.

Graham's new piece, *Persephone,* to the first three movements of Stravinsky's Symphony in C, was notable for its highly inventive visual imagery. Before the music begins there is a prologue, performed to the sound of rattling, in which the underworld is glimpsed: murky figures crawling beneath a shroud of black netting. Later, Pluto uses this net to ensnare Persephone. Pluto's realm is populated by grotesque shapes formed by dancers enclosed within single expanses of stretch fabric. The most striking figure is an inchoate mass of nine dancers covered in white. When it crosses the stage for the second time, a face straining against the fabric at the front, its mouth gaping, forms an eerie figurehead. Graham, as is her wont, tinkered with the production following the premiere. I was sorry to lose the black veils in which Persephone's friends enter after her seduction, which made them look like Wilis in mourning.

The production values throughout the season were of gratifyingly high caliber, including the unusually dramatic and sensitive lighting. Especially striking was last year's *Tangled Night,* with Ming Cho Lee's abstracted windswept ship and driftwood tree, and beautiful bronzed costumes by the much (and sometimes justly) maligned Halston, who also dressed *Persephone.* The music was excellently conducted by Stanley Sussman or Jonathan McPhee, and beautifully played by the pick-up orchestra. The Ensemble in *Celebration* and *Primitive Mysteries* was drilled to dedicated perfection. Several soloists stood out in individual roles: Maxine Sherman, an enticing Lilith in *Embattled Garden* and sea siren in *Tangled Night,* who managed to transform her sexiness into a wellspring of feminine maturity as the Pioneer Woman in *Appalachian Spring*; Takako Asakawa, both serene and passionate in *Primitive Mysteries*; the intensely dramatic and focused Terese Capucilli as Eve in *Garden* and in the title role in *Judith,* among others. And for longevity of repertory by a single choreographer, only New York City Ballet even approaches Martha Graham's six decades.

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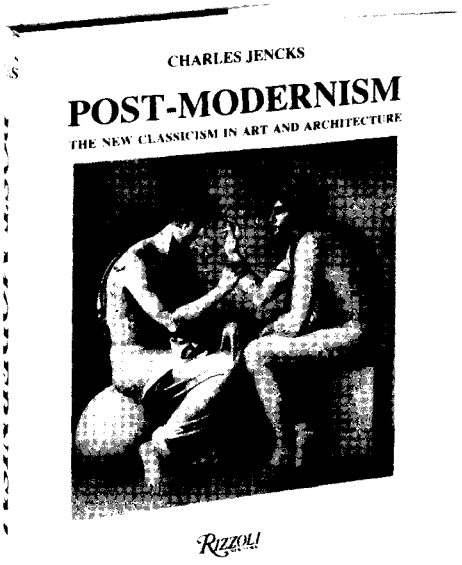

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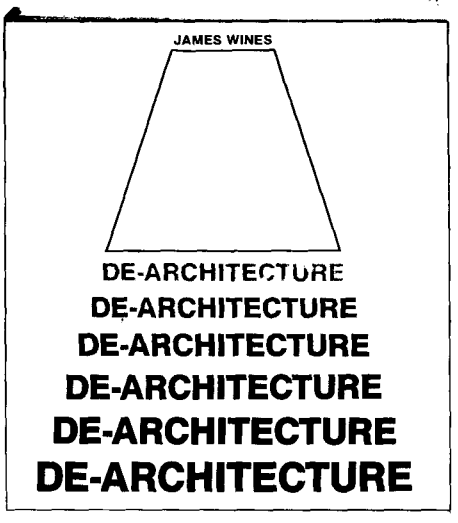

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Books

Sherwood Anderson: a room of his own

by James W. Tuttleton

In 1956, long after the death of Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941), William Faulkner called him "the father of my generation of American writers and the tradition of American writing which our successors will carry on." This was a moving tribute to the older writer and to the exceptional prose style Anderson had shaped in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). This short-story sequence and a handful of tales like "I Want to Know Why," "The Egg," "I'm a Fool," "The Man Who Became a Woman," and "Death in the Woods" have assured Anderson a place in the history of modern American letters.

But despite Faulkner's praise, the place of Sherwood Anderson in the development of American literary modernism is problematic. Although he was the author of a number of novels—*Windy McPherson's Son* (1916), *Marching Men* (1917), *Poor White* (1920), *Many Marriages* (1923), *Dark Laughter* (1925), *Beyond Desire* (1932), and *Kit Brandon* (1936)—none of them is read any longer. And there is a good reason for this neglect: Anderson simply could not attain in the novel the focus, energy, and feeling that is evident in his short-story collections—*Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), *The Triumph of the Egg and Other Stories* (1921), *Horses and Men* (1923), and *Death in the Woods and Other Stories* (1933). Some of his short stories are probably as good as any written by an American. But the fact is that his influence on the generation of Hemingway and Faulkner, and his reputation for giving all to his art, have come to be seen as more important than his work itself—always excepting *Winesburg* and a few tales.

In part, Anderson's fading critical reputation is to be accounted for by the fact that he was never really committed to radical experimentalism in the interesting vein of Stein and Faulkner. The tradition to which Faulkner assigned him was the tradition of Mark Twain, the storyteller of a boy's adolescent awakening, the tradition of the vernacular stylist of Mid-America. Furthermore, Anderson, like Willa Cather, longed for the past and resented the machine culture of technological America. Looking backward, he chose as his essential social theme the impact of industrialization on agrarian small-town life, and his tone was one of nostalgia for a lost world of displaced farmers, harness-makers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, country doctors, and local newspapermen. If Anderson was modern, he was modern in the way of D. H. Lawrence—in his persistent exploration of the power of human sexuality and the inarticulate struggle of commonplace people to understand it.

Anderson's attitudes and themes come out, confusedly, in his several autobiographical writings—*A Story Teller's Story* (1924), *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* (1926), and the posthumous *Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs* (1942), edited by his friend Paul Rosenfeld. These recollections create, with fictional variations, the story Anderson wanted to tell about himself—about his parents, the world

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of Clyde, Ohio (the model for Winesburg), his life in business, his decision to become a writer, his many marriages, and his failed personal relationships. Taken together, the memoirs create the myth of the artist that Anderson wanted us to know. James E. Schevill tried to sort out the facts from the myth in *Sherwood Anderson: His Life and Work* (1951). But a definitive life has had to await the recent publication of Ray Lewis White's compilation, *Sherwood Anderson: A Reference Guide* (1977), *Sherwood Anderson: Selected Letters* (1984), edited by Charles E. Modlin, and *Letters to Bab: Sherwood Anderson to Marietta D. Finley, 1916-1933* (1985), edited by William A. Sutton. Now that we have these letters, together with citations to a half century of interviews and essays in literary criticism, what can we say about the life of this complex man?

Sherwood Anderson, by Kim Townsend, a professor of English at Amherst College, is the first biography to take advantage of these new materials.[1] But this biography is not definitive. While Townsend has exceptional sympathy for Anderson and tells his story with due attention to the evident meaning of his thought and conduct, the elusive novelist somehow escapes the biographer's net. Partly this may be the consequence of Townsend's not having explored fully the large mass of criticism Anderson's work has elicited. At least his exiguous bibliography, listing only a handful of sources, omits mention of studies by Brom Weber, Rex Burbank, David D. Anderson, and collections of critical essays edited by Ray Lewis White and Walter B. Rideout. These might have been helpful in getting at the deeper implications of Anderson's mind and art. Not a critical biography in the fullest sense, in that Townsend does not give a detailed analysis of the fiction, *Sherwood Anderson* also suffers from a casualness of style, an indifference to precision in the handling of dates and times, and some glaring errors of fact that do not inspire confidence.

1 *Sherwood Anderson: A Biography,* by Kim Townsend; Houghton Mifflin, 370 pages, $22.95.

Nevertheless, Townsend dutifully recounts the circumstances of Anderson's birth to Emma Smith Anderson and her husband Irwin in 1876 in Camden, Ohio, their removal in 1883 to Clyde, a small town of 2,500 people, and their makeshift life with six children during Sherwood's youth. Of his parents, Townsend observes:

> A diary that she [Emma Smith Anderson, the writer's mother] kept during 1872 shows her to be a hard-working and lively young woman, happy to do her chores, to churn, to clean up the yard, to wash and iron, delighted to go on the social rounds that school and church and the rituals of courtship prescribed. A diary that Irwin [Anderson's father] kept shows him to be industrious, pious, and a lover of women.

Because Anderson's father was a financial failure who often left it up to his wife to manage the family, the boy Sherwood was necessarily a hustler, working at a variety of odd jobs, scrabbling for nickels and dimes, to help the family survive. Out of this experience arose Anderson's lifelong anger at his father. In the town of Clyde, Irwin Anderson was well liked as a grand storyteller of Civil War tales, a lover of parades, a performer of magic acts, and a supporter of town theatricals. Although Anderson's storytelling gifts derived from his flamboyant father, he could not help feeling resentment about the way his father had treated his mother. He got his revenge in the fiction. In *Windy McPherson's Son,* he described Irwin Anderson as "the boasting, incompetent father," "the blustering, pretending, inefficient old one." And in *Winesburg, Ohio* it is said of the protagonist George Willard's father: "He had always thought of himself as a successful man, although nothing he had ever done had turned out successfully. However, when he was out of sight of the New Willard House [their failing hotel] and had no fear of coming upon his wife, he swaggered and began to dramatize himself as one of the chief men of the town." Since *Winesburg* was dedicated to his mother Emma, "whose keen observations on the life

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about her first awoke in me the hunger to see beneath the surface of lives," it will come as no surprise that "Jobby," as Sherwood was nicknamed, resented the poverty of his mother's existence. Afterward he remarked in *Tar* that "he was in love with her all his life" and that when a mother like her dies when you are eighteen "what you do all your life afterwards is to use her as material for dreams." Her death in his adolescence froze Emma Anderson as an ideal woman.

After a stint in the army during the Spanish-American War, Anderson went to work for an advertising agency in Chicago as the new century dawned. His business success led to other jobs in Cleveland and in Elyria, Ohio. According to Townsend, "Anderson wrote copy about everything from ditch-digging machines to canned tomatoes, from patent medicines for loose bowels and thinning hair, toothpaste and washtubs and kitchen cabinets, to a remedy for diseases for hogs." He gave speeches with titles like "The Sales Master and the Selling Organization," and he published business-boosting articles in periodicals like *Agricultural Advertising*. A commercial success, in 1904 he married an educated, well-to-do Clyde girl, Cornelia Platt Lane. He and Cornelia had three children by 1911. In Elyria, Anderson established himself as president of the Anderson Manufacturing Company, a firm that sold a roofing compound. For five years he ran the business as an esteemed member of the Elyria Elks Club, the Country Club, and the Round Table Club, a town discussion group.

But he was clearly miscast in the role he was playing in the commercial and domestic life he had chosen. Gradually he became moody and eccentric. He needed isolation. In Elyria he created a special room where he could lock himself in. Secure in this private place, he would wash down the room, then scrub himself, preparing himself to write stories. Guilt and shame seem to have provoked an obsessive-compulsive desire for cleanliness. But of what did he feel guilty? Townsend, whose strengths are not those of a psychoanalytic kind, takes it on Anderson's word that he wanted to cleanse himself of his commercial sins, perhaps for writing mendacious ads or selling an unwanted roofing mix. Writing in his locked room was a curative, Anderson said. It delivered him from the feeling of being a "smooth son of a bitch." None of the writing from this period was immediately publishable, but vestiges of the monastic experience survive in *Windy McPherson's Son,* a novel ostensibly in revolt against what Anderson called "money making as an end in life." Something was definitely going on in that room. In that shut-in place appeared another self, projected as his fictive protagonist Sam, who had "another personality, a quite different being altogether, buried away within him, long neglected, often forgotten, a timid, shy destructive Sam who had never really breathed or lived or walked before men."

It would be too simple to say only that the alter ego of the artist was replacing the businessman in Anderson. The "destructive" figure who emerged in that room had never lived or walked before women either. He was soon to do both. The crisis in Anderson's life, the eruption of that destructive personality, occurred in November of 1912, when he was thirty-six. Anderson simply walked out of his office one day, said goodbye to his secretary, and left a strange note to his wife Cornelia: "There is a bridge over a river with cross-ties before it. When I come to that I'll be all right. I'll write all day in the sun and the wind will blow through my hair." Four days later he stumbled into a pharmacy in Cleveland, filthy, dazed, and incoherent. He had no idea who he was or where he was. From an address book in his pocket, his identity was established and he was hospitalized, until, as he put it later, "my mind came into my body." In accounting for this episode, Kim Townsend invokes the diagnosis of the "fugue state," as defined by Dr. "Henry" [sic] Stack Sullivan. According to *Harry* Stack Sullivan's *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry,* fugue states (common in adolescents) are episodes of "dreaming-while-awake." In this state "the relationship with circumambient reality and

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Hannah Hoech, *Chinese Girl with Fan*, 1926

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with the meanings to which things attach from one's past is, to a certain extent, fundamentally and as absolutely suspended as it is when one is asleep." This may indeed have been Anderson's affliction. But by his own account of the matter, Townsend makes it plain that Anderson wrote notes to Cornelia while he was wandering around, ostensibly in a daze. In recounting the episode in *A Story Teller's Story,* Anderson leaves it up in the air as to whether he "merely became shrewd and crafty" or whether he "really became temporarily insane."

Whatever may have been the diagnosis, Anderson described the event as a repudiation of the moral corruptions of philistine business and the strangulations of bourgeois domesticity in favor of a life devoted to the creation of art. So dramatic and thrilling was his account of the event that it came to stand for younger writers as a paradigm of the artist's sacrifice of everything for the sake of his art. Anderson was widely regarded as the American Gauguin, a painter he had never heard of at the time; it was an identification he did nothing to discourage.

The facts, however, are somewhat different from the account (or varied accounts) that Anderson's several memoirs have provided us. After his discharge from the hospital, he and Cornelia in fact got back together. After a visit to her family in Toledo in December, they went back to Elyria, where Anderson settled with his business partners. They packed up their belongings; Cornelia was to take the children up to her sister Stella's cottage at Little Point Sable, Michigan; Anderson would try to find work in Chicago to support them. Probably in the fall, as Townsend puts it, "they would regroup in Chicago." They never did. Given his state of mind and his growing and unaccountable hatred for poor Cornelia, the marriage could not survive.

Far from thumbing his nose at the commercial life, Anderson immediately went back to work for the Taylor-Critchfield advertising agency, his old employer. As late as 1918, he could write in an advertising publicity essay: "I do not understand why

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more novelists do not go into it [advertising]. It is all quite simple. You are to write advertisements for one who puts tomatoes in cans. You imagine yourself a canner of tomatoes. You become enthusiastic about the tomato. You are an actor given a role to play and you play it." Though always complaining, he worked in advertising for a decade after crossing that bridge over the river.

In any case, Anderson continued in business by day and wrote in the evenings. During this period he also fell in with the bohemian avant-garde of Chicago—Floyd Dell, Susan Glaspell, Tennessee Mitchell, Ben Hecht, Carl Sandburg, and Margaret Anderson, the editor of the *Little Review*. They avidly discussed their "modern ideas" on sex and marriage, the role of the artist, and the corruption of the commercial life. Margaret Anderson said that Sherwood, no intellectual, "didn't talk ideas, he told stories." He began to costume himself with brightly colored clothes and scarves. Ben Hecht said that the older writer "looked like an Italian barber but he exuded ego like a royalist." Cornelia occasionally visited, but it was clear that she didn't fit in. Of this period of Anderson's life, Floyd Dell later observed: "We were in love with life and willing to believe almost any modern theory which gave us a chance to live our lives more fully. We were incredibly well meaning. We were confused, miserable, gay, and robustly happy all at once." Most of these young bohemians were in their early twenties; Anderson was nearly forty, married, and the father of three children. But he had found his niche. They were all united by what Anderson later called the "wonderful feeling" of "leading a new free bold life, defying what seemed to us the terribly stodgy life out of which we had all come."

It was his wife Cornelia's opinion that Anderson "needed a mother rather than a wife." If so, the child inside of Anderson was increasingly of an indeterminate gender. Clearly Anderson's identity had a remarkable feminine component, and something like a feminine self began to manifest itself

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in his colorful clothes. (He even bought a sewing machine so that he could make his own flamboyant shirts.) An echo of this gender blurring is evident in "The Book of the Grotesque," the lead story in *Winesburg, Ohio.* There an old writer, the projection of the author, gets into bed to await the procession of figures who, passing before his inward eye, will become the grotesque inhabitants of Winesburg, memorialized so poignantly in the collection.

> Perfectly still he lay and his body was old and not of much use any more, but something inside him was altogether young. He was like a pregnant woman, only that the thing inside him was not a baby but a youth. No, it wasn't a youth, it was a woman, young and wearing a coat of mail like a knight. It is absurd, you see, to try to tell what was inside the old writer as he lay on his high bed and listened to the fluttering of his heart.

Something like this repressed feminine sensibility also arises in the first story of the collection, "Hands." This tale deals with a former teacher, Wing Biddlebaum, who was run out of another town for caressing his male students. Of Biddlebaum, Anderson wrote that "he was one of those rare, little-understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in the love of men." Anderson thought himself such a man. Anderson and his male friends went barhopping in Chicago, affecting the role of fairies, calling themselves "Little Eva" and "Mabel." Of this blurring of his masculinity Townsend only remarks that "his own [sexuality] was something of a mystery to him, a mystery that neither his marriage to Cornelia nor his encounters with nameless other women had done anything to clear up, but he did not set out to *solve* that mystery." Unfortunately, neither does Townsend.

In fact, Anderson felt a deep, obscure hostility to women. No doubt it had to do with his mother's abandonment of him, by dying in his impressionable adolescence. He wanted to be like her—fine, sensitive, and caring—and yet he was full of rage at her and targeted that rage on other women, whom he regarded as vampires. He had the candor to remark that "most women simply frighten me." He said that "I feel hunger within them. It is as though they wished to feed upon me." One of those he feared was Marietta (Bab) Finley, a reader for the Bobbs-Merrill Company whom he had met in 1914 at a play put on by the Little Theatre group. They appear to have been lovers; it is certain in any case that she wanted to marry him. In a rather cruel rebuff, he told her that she would have to settle for only an epistolary relationship with him. She was to receive his literary letters, once a week or oftener, and reply to him. They were to keep the correspondence, which would be a record of their feelings and ideas. But she should forget about his company and companionship; what he wanted in fact was a sounding board and a safe repository of his correspondence. Indeed, he wrote her 309 letters between 1916 and 1933, which she dutifully kept. He destroyed hers.

Meanwhile, at the top of his literary form, he was composing the tales that became *Winesburg, Ohio.* One dealt with the town doctor, who scribbled his thoughts on pieces of paper, then "stuffed them away in his pockets to become round hard balls." "Mother" is a tale of a frustrated but passionately mysterious woman very much like Emma Anderson. "Godliness" tells the story of the family of a God-intoxicated old farmer whose greed for land drives away his grandson. Another, "The Strength of God," tells the story of the Reverend Curtis Hartman, who cures himself of voyeurism by smashing the window through which he has spied on the naked teacher Kate Swift. In "Adventure," Alice Hindman, sexually crazed by years of awaiting the return of her faithless lover, bursts out of the house one night and runs naked in the rain, only to recover herself and return home.

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> When she got into bed she buried her face in the pillow and wept brokenheartedly. "What is the matter with me? I will do something dreadful if I am not careful," she thought, and turning her face to the wall, began trying to force herself to face bravely the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg.

Elmer Cowley, the title character of "Queer," irrationally beats up the reporter George Willard, just to prove that he isn't odd.

Several of the stories deal with young Willard's attempt to understand these sexually repressed and emotionally deformed fellow townspeople, who think of him as alone capable of understanding them and telling their stories. *Winesburg, Ohio* is in part the story of George Willard's initiation into the hidden motives and the obscure emotions of these inarticulate residents, as well as his discovery of the meaning of sex and love. Above all, he is to become the poet who knows the sweetness of the twisted apples in the orchard, the metaphor by which we know these Winesburg grotesques. As Kate Swift tells him in "The Teacher": "You must not become a mere peddler of words. The thing to learn is to know what people are thinking about, not what they say." At the end of the book, he boards the train for Chicago, determined to become an artist. These remarkable tales fairly poured out of Anderson in 1915 and 1916. He told Cornelia that he felt "like a woman, having babies, one after another, but without pain." Without question, the creation of the book, a kind of prose *Spoon River Anthology,* was a stunning achievement.

Although he was finished with Cornelia, Anderson was one of those who could not live, much less die, alone. He could not be without a woman. His next wife, Tennessee Mitchell, was not so much a mother as a playmate. After divorcing Cornelia, he married her in 1916 after a summer with her at Camp Owlyout, a quasi-nudist colony for avant-garde women passionate about eurythmic dance. Anderson was "the only faun in the camp" and had a grand time. A sculptor and piano tuner who had been the mistress of Edgar Lee Masters (who savaged her as a congenital nymphomaniac in one of his poems), Tennessee Mitchell drew Anderson deeper into the bohemian life and loves of the Chicago art world. With advanced views on marriage, they kept separate apartments and saw other people. Even so, Tennessee soon came to invade the private space, the secret room, of Sherwood Anderson. Packing a bag, he left Chicago in 1920 for Alabama, where he wrote Whitmanesque effusions like those he had already published in the hopeless verse of *Mid-American Chants* (1918). In Alabama, he also composed the perfectly awful novel *Many Marriages.* Meanwhile, Tennessee languished in Chicago. "The poor woman went and married me and is stuck to making her own living," he observed, "and it's hell."

The success of *Winesburg* (1919), *Poor White* (1920), another attack on industrialization and "the mechanization of American life," and *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) brought Anderson to the attention of the writers connected with *Seven Arts* in New York. For Waldo Frank, Paul Rosenfeld, Van Wyck Brooks, and Edna Kenton, Anderson seemed an authentic Mid-American voice, and they hailed him as a diamond in the rough, a home-grown artist who would inaugurate what Brooks had called "America's Coming-of-Age." Anderson tried to oblige Brooks by stressing his quintessential Midwesternness. In an essay called "An Apology for Crudity," Anderson advised American writers to turn away from "neat slick writing," such as that produced by James and Howells, and dramatize "the crude expression" of the people's lives. "And if we are a crude and childlike people, how can our literature hope to escape the influence of that fact? Why, indeed, should we want to escape?" Not recognizing in Anderson the merely warmed-over ideas of Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank could observe: "To me, the young New Yorker who knew his Europe well and had scarce seen his own land beyond the Eastern seaboard, Sherwood Anderson was America." Anderson

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played this role to the hilt: "I am an intensification of the spirit of my times," he modestly admitted. But all of this made Virginia Woolf very impatient; in her review of *A Story Teller's Story,* she complained that Anderson's constant repetitions of the line "I am the American man" were ridiculous. There was nothing he could do about being an American man, she pointed out, so he ought to forget about it and simply write.

In 1921 Anderson packed his bag again and sailed for Europe. In France he met Joyce, Pound, and Stein; in England, Arnold Bennett, Ford Madox Ford, and John Masefield. Not likely to fall for expatriatism, he returned to New York and in the following year he met Elizabeth Prall in a Doubleday bookstore and threw himself into her Greenwich Village crowd, which included Max Eastman, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Stark Young—and Susan Glaspell and Floyd Dell, who had left Chicago. Divorcing Tennessee Mitchell, Anderson married Elizabeth and took off for New Orleans in 1924. There he met and encouraged Faulkner, who had worked with Elizabeth at Doubleday.

Eugene O'Neill had capitalized on the Harlem craze with *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924), which was followed by DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* (1925) and Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Why not Anderson? In New Orleans he composed *Dark Laughter* (1925), a sentimental fantasy about "the war, new sex-consciousness, niggers—a slow, fantastic dance of sounds and thought," with (in the foreground) "neuroticism, the hurry and self-consciousness of modern life" and (in the background) "the easy, strange laughter of the blacks." Anderson thought himself "inward with the ways of blacks"; Mencken called it "one of the most profound novels of our time"; and indeed it was a best-seller. But Fitzgerald was more nearly right in calling it "lousy." The book was sentimental in its view of blacks, incoherent in its structure, and grotesque in its style. Hemingway and Faulkner expressed their disillusionment with the father of their generation by parodying Anderson's style and subjects—Hemingway in *The Torrents of Spring* (1926) and Faulkner in *Sherwood Anderson and Other Creoles* (1926). In fact, Anderson's career as a serious writer was reaching its end.

After leaving New Orleans, the Andersons settled in Marion, Virginia, where the novelist built a big house. His inspiration as a fiction writer had pretty much evaporated, and he felt guilty about accepting the $100-a-week advances that the publisher Horace Liveright kept sending him. To keep himself busy and earn his keep, Anderson bought the county's two newspapers, the Republican *Smyth County News* and the *Marion Democrat.* Anderson liked the life of the country journalist and wrote scores of columns and editorials about subjects of interest to small-town readers. But even this life was not to be permanently fulfilling. He frankly got tired of Elizabeth Prall and divorced her in 1932. When his rejected inamorata and correspondent Bab Finley sympathized, he told her that he could no longer accept money or help from anyone, "least of all from any woman." He told her that she had "as much right to all you feel, as woman, as I have to what I feel as artist and man." But, he warned her, "now I am separated from that. I have fought to get here in this room alone." Again the motif of the room—and the destructive personality that would keep the woman out of it. In any event, he concluded: "As to me, as a man, it should be forgotten now."

During the 1930s, Anderson oscillated between his two compelling subjects. The first was "the story of sex, what man does to woman and woman to man, what marriage does, etc." There is no reason to doubt that the subject was beyond his competence and that he had little understanding of what drove him as a man. Heroizing D. H. Lawrence, he developed an idea that true masculinity was sympathetic and tender, never boastful of female conquests, and that men needed intimacy with each other so as to draw off the elements of aggression he detected in their relationship with women. He told Dreiser that "it is our loneliness for

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each other that has made most of us throw too much on woman . . . making women carry more than their load."

> Now what I have been thinking is that we need here among us some kind of new building up of a relationship between man and man. I feel so strongly on this matter that I am thinking of trying to get my thoughts and those of others who also feel this thing into form. I think even of a general letter or pamphlet that I might call "American Man to American Man."

Townsend believes that Anderson's dim, inarticulate longing here was for genuine male friendship—"not male bonding, not homosexual relations, or patriarchal domination by another name, but friendship." But whatever Anderson meant would require a poet, or psychoanalyst, to say. His preoccupation with the life of feeling carried with it a sense of the inadequacy of words to express the buried life, as well as a suspicion of language itself as distorting to the very feeling it is meant to communicate. An instance of his growing indifference to precision of language, of the corruption of his style, is this passage from *Dark Laughter*:

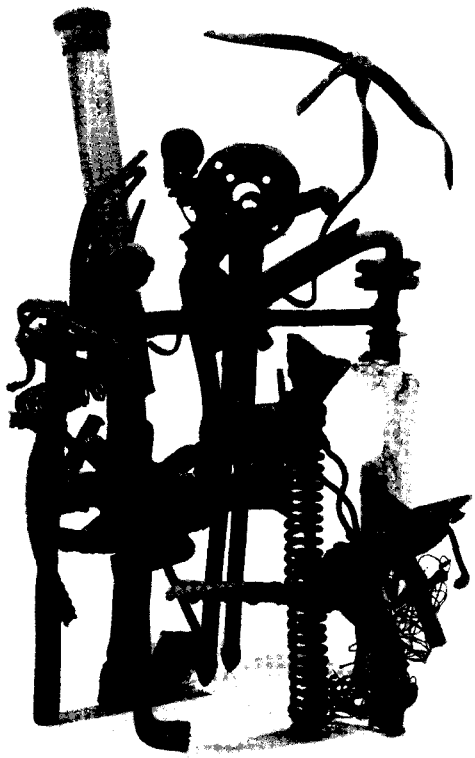
> The woman. Mystery. Love of women. Scorn of women. What are they like? Are they like trees? How much can a woman thrust into the mystery of life, think, feel? Love men. Take women. Drift with the drifting of days. That life goes on does not concern you. It concerns women.

One might almost conclude that "it is absurd . . . to try to tell what was inside the old writer," yet this position no serious student of Anderson's mind and art can possibly accept. One constantly longs for Townsend to probe the writer's mind more deeply.

An instance of Townsend's reluctance to penetrate the surfaces of Anderson's prose is suggested by his remarks about Anderson's essay on D. H. Lawrence. Praising Lawrence's true maleness, Anderson concluded the piece with what Townsend calls "the curious image of blood" from a cut on Anderson's hand. Here is the passage:

Richard Stankiewicz

Sculpture from the 1950s and 1960s



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> Little red blotches of my blood covering the sheets on which I try to write of D. H. Lawrence, dead.
>
> Spoiling the sheets.
>
> Blood spoiling clean white sheets of paper.
>
> Not quite. Blood is nice on white sheets on which a man speaks, even falteringly, of a man's man like D. H. Lawrence.

Townsend's only comment is, "at the very least, he imagined Lawrence as his blood brother." No doubt this is true. But given Anderson's fear of women, his disgust at coarse sexuality, and the feminine component in his personality, the menstrual implications of these lines require analysis. Townsend skirts the difficult work of naming, on the Andersonian principle that it is absurd to try to tell what was inside the writer, that there is some value in *not* precisely naming the experience. In any case, the mystery of Woman in her physical sexuality did not prevent Anderson from marrying Eleanor Copenhaver, a YMCA worker, on July 6, 1933. Anderson was fifty-six. "Poor as I am at marriage," he remarked, "I always need it, and I do think it rather courageous and fine of her to tackle it."

Anderson's second subject in the 1930s was politics—specifically the sentimental view of labor conditions. Eleanor had roused Anderson to get interested in working people, and—like Sinclair Lewis, Dreiser, Edmund Wilson, and many other writers—he toured factories, lumber camps, refineries, and mills. On the Left, during the Depression, it was the thing to do. Although he had once remarked that "nothing in the world could ever make me a socialist" and that he had "no scheme for changing anything in the social structure," he started attacking business, the media, the schools, and churches, "pretty much the whole middle and professional classes" that, in his view, had disenfranchised the worker. Ridding himself of guilt seemed to motivate this enterprise as well, for he remarked that "it is perhaps only when we try to bend the arts to serve our damn middle-class purposes that we become unclean . . . ."

Out of these tours came his book *Perhaps Women* (1931), a complaint that "modern man is losing his ability to retain his manhood in the face of the modern way of utilizing the machine and that what hope there is for him lies in women." Before long he was becoming "more and more a communist," and in 1932 he signed a manifesto (along with Dos Passos, Lewis Mumford, Waldo Frank, and Edmund Wilson) calling for "a temporary dictatorship of the class-conscious workers." Another of the manifestos he signed proclaimed that "as responsible intellectual workers, we have aligned ourselves with the frankly revolutionary Communist party." In that year he published "How I Came to Communism" in *New Masses* and supported Foster and Ford, the Communist ticket, for the presidency. Of Anderson's political seduction by the Left, Townsend provides the most superficial kind of commentary, of which the following is illustrative.

> Whether or not Dreiser or Anderson joined the Party, which neither ever did, whether or not they went to the Soviet Union, which Dreiser did and Anderson did not (though he made plans in 1932), as Anderson knew full well, the Party wasn't terribly interested in the likes of them. The Communist Party was a working-class party, and they were members of "the artist class."

The fact is that in the Kharkov Congress of Revolutionary Writers in 1930, Stalin called for American writers to produce a genuine proletarian literature in the United States, and the Communist Party regularly recruited every artist and intellectual who could be construed to have a "correct" ideological position. Given Anderson's typical fuzzy-mindedness and political naïveté, there was little chance that the Party would accept him, although one is never fully confident of Townsend's facts. For Dreiser in fact eventually *did* join the Communist Party—after Stalin had Earl Browder expelled. As W. A. Swanberg reports in his biography of Dreiser, William Z. Foster, in his welcoming letter, told "Comrade Dreiser" that "we

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feel your joining the Party at this time is particularly appropriate, now that our organization is purging itself of the opportunism that seeped into it during recent years . . . . Welcome to the ranks of the Communist Party." Still, Daniel Aaron in *Writers on the Left* is probably right to describe Anderson as one of the "unclassifiable" authors who were merely attracted to Communism.

Anderson "came to Communism" largely out of a bohemian aversion to the bourgeois life he had flamboyantly abandoned. "I am not respectable and do not desire to be," he said. Reflecting on his political actions, he later said that he had entered "a transition period" where he had been "reckless," signed manifestos that were possibly "at bottom nonsense," for he was not "a politically-minded person." He insisted that he was just a storyteller, which he was. Nevertheless, it seems perfectly clear that for a short time, like a good many other muddle-headed writers, he loaned his name to the enemies of liberal democracy. Perhaps in partial recompense he published *Home Town* in 1940, a paean to small-town life in America. In the following year he died on a cruise, as a result of swallowing a toothpick. He was hospitalized in the Canal Zone, but peritonitis had set in and he could not be saved.

After 1925 Anderson's writing career was in effect over. But *Winesburg, Ohio* remains a testament to that spurt of creative genius that informed it. Of these tales, "Loneliness" deserves a final mention. In this story a painter named Enoch Robinson tells George Willard his story. Abandoning his wife and children, and disgusted by the Greenwich Village painters who can talk only of technique, he had shut them all out of his life.

> In a half indignant mood he stopped inviting people into his room and presently got into the habit of locking the door. He began to think that enough people had visited him, that he did not need people any more. With quick imagination he began to invent his own people to whom he could really talk and to whom he explained the things he had been unable to explain to living people. His room began to be inhabited by the spirits of men and women among whom he went, in his turn saying words.

Then, as Anderson was fond of vaguely putting it, "something happened," something that drove Enoch Robinson out of New York and into the backwater town of Winesburg. "The thing that happened was a woman." A woman musician in his boarding house makes Robinson's acquaintance. "She got to coming in there after there hadn't been anyone in the room for years," Enoch tells George Willard. "In she came and sat down beside me, just sat and looked about and said nothing. Anyway, she said nothing that mattered." The two simply sit and talk. "We just talked of little things, but I couldn't sit still," Robinson says. "I wanted to touch her with my fingers and to kiss her." Fear overcomes Enoch Robinson. "I had a feeling about her. She sat there in the room with me and she was too big for the room. I felt that she was driving everything else away." He becomes frantic and hysterical, trying to convince her "what a big thing I was in that room." Of course the woman cannot understand his hysterical ranting but she knows enough from his curses to go away and never come back. "Things went to smash," Robinson tells young George. "Out she went through the door and all the life there had been in the room followed her out. She took all of my people away. They went out through the door after her. That's the way it was."

George Willard cannot, of course, understand the meaning of the story: he is too young and inexperienced. Whether Anderson understood its meaning is doubtful. But the story is a paradigm of the troubled relationship between Anderson's art and the shame of sexual needs he felt to be unclean and disabling to his art. Revering his mother while raging at her abandonment of him, Anderson experienced a conflict that led him to abandon his wives before they could leave him, to insist on seclusion and privacy,

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to brutalize women, if necessary, to have that room of his own. None of them could match up to Emma Smith Anderson. He knew he had the ability to step on women, "to be able to be a son of a bitch and pop right out of it as gay as a lark." Thinking back over his treatment of his wives and lovers, he remarked: "I could wreck myself forever on this shore. The whole coast is alive with the jagged rocks of my unkindness . . . . But if I began thinking of that I would go crazy." Toward the end he told his daughter that if his writings proved "good and lasting," it would be "the only justification I shall ever be able to find for the inconvenience and suffering I have brought on others as well as myself."

Whether the justification was adequate, readers of Anderson's work must decide. Kim Townsend is inclined to think that, "as a writer, he remains in Dreiser's shadow (which is exactly where he thought he belonged)." It is difficult to disagree with this judgment, or with the evidence Townsend has provided for Elizabeth Hardwick's view that "as *a case,*" Anderson is "unfailingly interesting." For me, Anderson himself gave the best brief assessment of his art. He called himself "the minor author of a minor masterpiece." To become this minor author cost him dearly, and those about him suffered a very great deal of pain. Still, out of the process came some very memorable fiction about the stranger forms of sexual identity.

Juilliard life and death

Judith Kogan Nothing But the Best. Random House, 239 pages, $18.95

reviewed by Samuel Lipman

Harpist and lawyer Judith Kogan's *Nothing But the Best,* an account of student life at the elite and prestigious Juilliard School in New York, is a story not of lives but of deaths. The individual deaths of which she writes are those of the minds and souls of many, if not most, of our best young musicians. The more general death her book all too tragically sketches is that of music as the source of a transcendent commitment and fulfillment.

In many ways, it is Miss Kogan's subject, and not her treatment of it, which requires that what she writes be taken seriously. *Nothing But the Best* is hardly a work of art in itself. Written in a banal style, it is prevailingly sentimental, indulging in a characteristic tone of what can only be called mawkish nihilism, in which florid suffering and pain are undergone for no final purpose and with no final meaning.

Moreover, it is easy to dismiss the horror stories with which *Nothing But the Best* abounds as little more than the resentment that marks most books about the encounter between young people and the institutions that seek to mold them. It can also be said, and correctly, that it has never been easy to become a musician, or to remain one as the infirmities of age replace the energies of youth. The casualties of high-level music education can hardly come as a surprise to those who have known a great number of musicians, and many Juilliard students and graduates among them; in my own case, I was a student at Juilliard from 1959 to 1962, and my wife, the pianist Jeaneane Dowis, taught there from 1957 to 1968.

Nothing But the Best suffers, too, from an absence of a personal voice. Unlike *Dancing on my Grave* (1986), the remarkable memoir by the dancer Gelsey Kirkland, Miss Kogan's book lacks the fully authenticated voice which can convey suffering without sentimentality. She has given us little hard information. Peter Mennin and Joseph Polisi, the two Juilliard presidents who served during the period of which Miss Kogan writes, are never mentioned by name or distinguished by their very different policies. The one section which describes a real adult musician—the conductor Stanislaw Skrowaczeski—is vapid and immensely complimentary. The one section which deals with a named student is more consequential, however. It describes Midori, a fourteen-year-old Japanese violin prodigy who can play flaw-

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lessly all the most difficult works of the violin repertory but who must always be accompanied offstage by her beloved stuffed Snoopy dog. Everywhere else, the book consists of vignettes of nameless students and teachers, with nearly all distinguishing features confused or obliterated (except in the case of an easily identifiable portrait of Midori's teacher, Dorothy DeLay) to protect the guilty as well as the innocent.

Yet the horror stories have their effect. Here are students who practice in fear that someone may have planted a razor blade between the keys of a studio piano; here are students who use physical force to eject colleagues from scarce practice rooms; here are faculty members who practice psychological torture on their students and demand fees as high as two hundred dollars for the lessons which for many young people have come to be a requirement for success in the auditions (heard by the very same faculty members) which determine entrance into the school; here are parents for whom the education of their children for musical stardom becomes a cause more important than their children's very existence; here are administrators who seem to have no goal beyond their own survival and who view the task of leadership as no more than one of creating an environment in which a very few students prosper mightily and the rest fall more or less quietly by the wayside. Here, in short, is a world closely suggesting the seventeenth-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes's description (in *Leviathan* [1651]) of the state of nature: "a condition of war of everyone against everyone . . . no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

Miss Kogan makes clear that at Juilliard it is not the muse who rules but the bitch goddess success. Her words form an indictment of professional music education not just at Juilliard but wherever career goals rule the roost:

> Those who play one of the big three—piano, violin and cello—focus practice on solo literature. They, at least at first, plan on solo careers. Anything less, they believe, represents failure. Those who play wind and brass instruments focus on solo repertoire and orchestral excerpts. They plan on careers in major symphony orchestras. Everyone practices to build facility and accumulate repertoire. Any other demands—even musical ones—are annoying distractions. Pianists fulfill the chamber music requirements with undemanding accompanying or soloistic sonata-playing. Theory and ear training are considered classes to be endured. Music history is considered worthwhile only when it deals with the pieces the students play. Little is expected in the classrooms. Teachers spoon-feed students and apologize for minimal demands. Tests insult the intelligence. Cheating is commonplace.

How are these lucky students selected for such a focused education? Just as the outcome of Juilliard study is judged by only one standard, the entrance requirement is single-minded. What Miss Kogan so devastatingly puts down on paper has been common knowledge for generations of talents:

> Juilliard does not care whether they can tie their shoes, crack an egg or boil a pot of water. Juilliard does not care whether they can screw in a light bulb, mend a fence or feed a cat. Juilliard does not seem to care whether they can put an English sentence together either. Juilliard cares about whether they can do one thing: perform.

It must be said that in this regard, at least, Juilliard seems to choose well. The best of Juilliard students—and Juilliard, it cannot be repeated too often, is only interested in furthering those whom it has chosen as the best—have an enviable record in making solo careers.

But even the best young people can hardly live by success alone. What about student social life, that carefree artistic paradise about which Henry Murger wrote so enticingly (and which Puccini, following him, set to music so lyrically) in *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (1848)? Once again Miss Kogan paints a dismal picture:

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> Social life is strange. On the one hand, students are drawn to one another by common goals and problems. They are like members of a fanatic sect. But these devotees are not equal in the eyes of the Juilliard god, so alliances yield tension as often as solace. Talk of success rankles friends who always consider the news in light of their own circumstance. Sensitivity and suspicion are heightened. Intimates one day don't acknowledge each other the next.

What happens to these students after they leave school? Here Miss Kogan, though conscious of the perils and miseries of adult artistic life, seems to waffle. Some former students, now on their own, discover themselves; some find deeper meaning in the music they have previously only superficially regarded; many find the embarrassment of not making a grand career difficult to admit to others (and, I suspect, even more difficult to admit to themselves). In predictable (and sentimental) fashion, *Nothing But the Best* ends with the story of an ex-prodigy pianist for whom success as a young artist has not made up for a feeling of inner emptiness. Then, the young pianist achieves a personal epiphany while

> playing a Mozart concerto on the other side of the world . . . . During the concert he felt as if something—as if Mozart himself—were leading him by the hand. The force overcame him. He went with it, as if he were on automatic pilot. He had never felt anything like it. It was liberating . . . . He realized then that it was all worth it.

But the book ends as befits a book about people for whom the school experience is everything. Miss Kogan's very last words describe how her Mozart-saved hero, needing to warm up before a Lincoln Center audition, manages to hold onto a Juilliard practice room in the face of a student's attempt to take it away from him. After such victories, one might well ask, what salvation?

Like the sentimentality of Miss Kogan's ending, the official reaction to the book at Juilliard has been predictable: the school bookstore, or so *New York* magazine tells us, has refused to stock the book, finding that it "inaccurately and unjustifiably portrays" the school. And indeed the Juilliard administration could hardly have been expected to like such an unflattering picture of its activities. Whether it is a good idea to call attention to the book by banning its sale on school property is another matter. Discount bookstores in the neighborhood will probably find a way to fill the Juilliard students' literary needs—at least in this regard.

There can be little doubt, it seems to me, that *Nothing But the Best* is accurate in describing the joyless life of the best music students today. Perhaps Juilliard, given its location at the center of the American classical music business, is more airless than the Philadelphia-based Curtis Institute of Music and the numerous less high-pressured institutions (almost all associated with universities and colleges) across the country. Perhaps, too, the very success on the part of Juilliard in graduating glamorous students has further narrowed its educational scope and increased its already single-minded concentration on producing winners.

All this may be—and I suspect is—true; Juilliard is a tough place to study and teach, doubtless it is a tough place to run. And yet fairness demands that the misery at Juilliard be put in the context in which serious music is being done today. Under unparalleled attack from popular entertainment, the present product of the continuously increasing atrophy of a once bounteous creative tradition, and the target of a kind of praise from the ever more ignorant that can only be characterized as (in Arnold's lapidary phrase) "the grand name without the grand thing," serious music now places an impossible demand on its education. This demand, made by thoughtful musicians everywhere, is nothing less than that the shortcomings of music as an art and as a profession be made up through education, that every failure of ideals and practice be remedied through a pure training of the young.

As important as education is, it can hardly

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be expected to be more than the messenger that brings the news about life. The emptiness of a Juilliard education is no more than the emptiness of most lives in music; the brutality of the behavior of Juilliard students and Juilliard faculty is no more than the dog-eat-dog behavior of professionals who find fulfillment in glamour and career success, rather than in wisdom.

Judith Kogan has written a book about one aspect of musical life, a book that without advancing a remedy accurately describes the symptoms of the disease. The sad truth is that Juilliard is the best—the best of a bad situation. Because the problem of serious music is systemic, not local, the cure cannot be expected to come from one school, or from many schools. Increased attention to academic subjects, a wider knowledge of the musical literature, a lessening of the purely competitive atmosphere: all these, helpful in themselves, will not affect students' perception of the world into which they must graduate. It is the world of music that must be changed, and this change can only come from those who have responsibility for music, and for civilization. As so often in art, change, to be effective, must come from the top.

Life of the artist

Roger Berthoud The Life of Henry Moore. Dutton, 465 pages, $29.95

reviewed by Eric Gibson

Just how is one to write the biography of the sculptor Henry Moore? His wasn't the sort of life likely to contain episodes of outrageous or scandalous conduct. On the contrary, he was thoroughly bourgeois, and not at all given to *épatant* gestures or escapades of any kind. Moreover, his life has long been an open book, its major episodes known and well documented in the many monographs that appeared regularly during his lifetime. Indeed, so unsensational, so "ordinary" was Moore's life—he died in 1986 at the age of eighty-eight—that the only question it ever prompted was how this quintessentially English figure could produce sculpted figures and forms of such psychologically resonant character. Where did these images come from?

In the new *Life of Henry Moore,* Roger Berthoud—deputy editor of *The Illustrated London News* and the author of an earlier biography of the British painter Graham Sutherland—adopts about the only approach left to a Moore biographer. He aims to fill out the existing, received picture of Moore with as much fresh documentary material as possible, while at the same time doing all he can to get past the hagiographic public image to the "real" Moore. To this end he has been greatly aided by his timing. Nearly everyone who ever knew Moore was still alive when Berthoud began researching his book in the early Eighties, so he had access to the correspondence and reminiscences of principals who have since departed the scene. (Moore himself died before the book was completed.) This alone ought to have made the work definitive. Yet though "authorized" —begun with the subject's approval—Berthoud's book is not the "official" biography, since the artist's daughter Mary refused to allow him access to crucial pre-1955 diaries and other archival material. The result, however, is a good, workmanlike account of Moore's life in which aesthetic developments have their place as episodes in an ongoing chronicle of events. Berthoud is appreciative and generally impartial, and he leaves us a Henry Moore substantially the same as the one we knew before we started the book, only a more fully rounded figure.

Berthoud manages to do what every biographer needs to do in order to bring his subject to life: he removes the aura of inevitability from the succession of events and gives us a feeling for the life as it was actually lived. From the vantage point of the Sixties and after, when Moore was famous and modernism as a whole had overcome virtually all remaining resistance, it was easy to think that Moore's success just happened, that it was his destiny to overcome all obsta-

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cles and proceed to the apotheosis. Certainly the monographs tended to make us think that way, starting with Moore's supposed epiphany, when he realized his vocation in elementary school, and going on from there. Berthoud's book is at its best in its first half, when it gets behind all that and gives us a clear idea of what Moore was up against personally and professionally.

Moore *was* gifted, there's no doubt about it. But he was breasting strong currents in choosing to be an artist. A Yorkshire miner's son, he hoped to make good in an England where social class still exerted a powerful determining force over one's future. Moreover, England was hardly the most propitious place for the kind of art Moore wanted to make. Modernism didn't really arrive there until Roger Fry introduced it in 1910. (In France, by contrast, it was arguably a half century old.) Thus, Moore was one of a handful of English artists fated to forge the early history of English modernism and to face down the resistance that modernism was to meet there.

A measure of Moore's early uphill battle comes through in a story Berthoud tells of the artist's student days at the Royal College of Art. Moore had become by then a devotee of Mexican sculpture because of its ability to convey, even in its depiction of figures, a feeling for the original stone, and of "direct carving," a technique used by earlier modernists (like Brancusi) in which the artist went straight to the block without the use of preparatory models. Yet Moore found himself in an academic environment where Mexican sculpture was viewed as "garbage" and direct carving as a means of copying, not originating, works of art. Berthoud recounts how Moore coped with the absurdities and frustrations of the double life he was forced to lead:

> Tacking uneasily between the constraints of college work and the frustrations of his private carving, Henry decided to prove to himself that his hard-won skills as a carver could be used for conventional purposes. An opportunity came when Professor Wood required him to copy a Renaissance head. Moore asked whether he could carve it directly into marble. No, that would not produce an accurate copy, he was told. He must make a plaster model, and use the pointing machine to translate it into marble. Henry persuaded his friend Barry Hart to let him do it direct. The work chosen was a relief by Domenico Rosselli in the Victoria and Albert Museum, called *Virgin and Child with Three Cherub Heads.* Henry's version of the Virgin's head is more three-dimensional and a virtuoso feat of carving. To complete the deception, he peppered the Virgin's face with tiny holes like those left by the pointing machine. Derwent Wood was taken in, and well pleased with the result. So, naturally, was Henry.

The story is revealing as well because it shows how much Moore's innate "genius" was driven by simple ambition and hard work.

When Moore was twenty-six, he received a travelling scholarship to Italy. The works he saw there—especially the Masaccio frescoes, with their grandeur and genuine emotion—deeply unsettled him. For Moore, they invested the Greco-Roman tradition of naturalism with an aesthetic relevance and vitality that it had never possessed in the academy. The result was a profound conflict in him between the Greco-Roman tradition and modernist abstraction, between naturalism and the anti-naturalist, unrefined aesthetic of, for example, Mexican art. It would be twenty years before Moore managed to reconcile these stylistic extremes.

Clearly this trip to Italy was crucial to Moore's development as an artist. But apart from telling us about an unrequited love affair on the trip, Berthoud probes very little beneath the surface in his straightforward account of Moore's Italian journey. Generally speaking, this is true for the book as a whole. We pick up the biography hoping to learn more about the inner Moore, the sources of his various impulses and conflicts, the deeper effect of his experience, but Berthoud stays close to pure facts. Thus,

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when Moore returns to Italy in the late Forties and makes a point of revisiting the sites of his earlier, formative trip, Berthoud simply gives us a report and moves on. We get no inkling of how this powerfully nostalgic journey must have affected the artist.

In his straightforward recounting of the life, however, Berthoud has a valuable tale to tell concerning the radical change that came over the international art world after World War II, when embattled modernists became international celebrities, seemingly overnight. Moore began his career during the Twenties and Thirties—he was just twenty when he was demobilized at the end of World War I—as part of a loose-knit group of ambitious, avant-garde artists that included Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, and Paul Nash. Moore's work was unusual because he imposed a number of distortions on conventional figure subjects, like the mother and child. He deliberately made the proportions irregular, the limbs blunt and blocky, to echo the original piece of stone. In the process, he made his figures appear animated not by rational impulse but by unconscious forces, or by nature itself.

Opposition to modernism was sufficiently entrenched at this time that avant-garde artists were dependent on an enlightened minority for whatever professional opportunities came their way. In this context Moore was perhaps luckier than most. He taught at the Royal College of Art for almost a decade, in spite of repeated pressure on its principal, Sir William Rothenstein, to dismiss him. Jacob Epstein wrote the catalogue essay for his first one-man show in 1928, and Moore soon met Kenneth Clark and Herbert Read. Clark was already director of the National Gallery and Read was an emerging critic. Yet this did not prevent regular attacks on Moore from appearing in the press, nor did it prevent his colleagues at the Royal College from trying to oust him after his show in 1931. As late as 1944, Moore's work, in the form of the comparatively tame and naturalistic *Northampton Madonna,* caused a public outcry.

By 1950, all that had changed. Moore was rapidly in the process of becoming a national and international institution. To be sure, part of this transformation can be explained as the normal trajectory of a successful career. In 1946, Moore had been the first living British artist accorded a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and two years after that he had taken first prize at the Venice Biennale. Moreover, his "Shelter Drawings" of Londoners hiding from the Blitz—among his most haunting and moving works and, with the *Northampton Madonna,* among his most naturalistic—had given him a new image in the eyes of the British public. He went from being a "Bolshevist" artist dedicated to a "cult of ugliness" with "utter contempt for the natural beauty of women and children," as some early reviews had put it, to being a fellow Briton, an artist deeply sympathetic to the predicament of his countrymen.

But there was more to it than that. Before the war Read and Clark had made Moore the chief means of spreading the gospel of modernism in England. They introduced his exhibitions in person or in print, and wrote essays and monographs about his work. Clark initially liked only Moore's drawings, although he eventually came around to the sculpture. For Read, however, there was never any doubt: Moore was an old master from the very beginning. "There has been no compromise in the life of Henry Moore," Read wrote at one point, "and now, in the fullness of his power, he offers us the perfected products of his genius." Read's words appeared in a 1933 monograph, at a time when Moore, then in his mid-thirties, had barely four years of mature work behind him.

Still, it didn't matter. Moore's own achievements, coupled with Read's and Clark's fervent proselytizing, set the stage for the role Moore was to play after the war. He became the cultural surrogate for Britain's relinquished political prestige, the symbol of enduring vitality to a nation that had suddenly found its place in the world balance of power drastically altered. In short order,

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travelling exhibitions, commissions, and publications multiplied, dealers vied to handle his output; he began to serve as a museum trustee and to receive academic honors. Most conspicuously, he became the artist of choice for all public projects. This last role reached a kind of absurdist apogee in the early Sixties with the commission of an outdoor reclining figure for Lincoln Center. Moore was unanimously chosen by the Center's art committee and by its architects, Eero Saarinen, Gordon Bunshaft, and Philip Johnson; but the commission nearly fell through when it was discovered that each of the architects had approached Moore for other buildings they were designing at the time.

What effect did all this celebrity have on Moore as a man and an artist? The postwar years saw Moore increasingly working in bronze and carving less and less. He was nearly fifty when the war ended and he found himself gradually unable to meet the considerable physical demands of carving. His last carved work, a *Reclining Figure* from the early Sixties, was executed in elmwood rather than stone. Moore's use of bronze had two advantages. First, it permitted him to make the original in plaster, a malleable material; second, it allowed him to make multiple copies and meet the increasing demand for his work.

But the gain in quantity meant a loss of impact. Moore had trained himself as a carver, and the power of his work had always derived from the sense he conveyed of the artist imposing his will on his material in order to let it speak for itself. In the bronze works, particularly those enlarged to architectural scale, there is a marked loss of vitality, a dissipation of energy. In the swellings and undulations of his forms, with their surface gougings and furrows, we feel we are looking at surrogates for the wood grain and stone of the earlier carved pieces. We are looking, in other words, at manufactured rather than fortuitous effects.

How much of this state of affairs was Moore himself responsible for? Berthoud is characteristically discreet, but we get an idea of the answer from an interview with a former studio assistant, an art student who spent a summer working for Moore in the early Fifties:

> The pace of the work was leisurely. Things got done but no one was killing themselves. To my naïve and rather puritan eyes, Henry was more involved in the PR and meeting people than I thought proper. He should have been in there getting on with things . . . . the degree of control even when I was there was inadequate, I thought.

And Berthoud himself speaks of the "whiff of commercialism [that] hung in the air" from Moore's practice of paying the owners of his earlier unique pieces for permission to cast multiple editions of them.

Yet Moore would not have been human if he had not succumbed in some way to the blandishments of the public realm. The wonder is that he withstood them as steadfastly as he did. Certainly there were enough contemporaries and followers who became totally corrupted. Only someone with a strong sense of himself could have, as Moore did in the Fifties, decline a knighthood, saying "titles change one's name and one's opinion of oneself." Still, he seems to have come very close to turning into "Henry Moore, Inc." Berthoud's *Life of Henry Moore* may leave unanswered many questions about the artist's deeper self, but for its cautionary tale about artistic success, the book is required reading.

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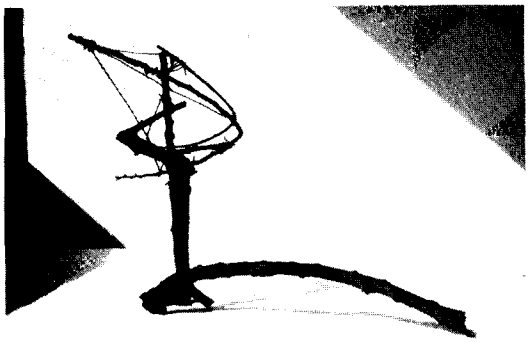
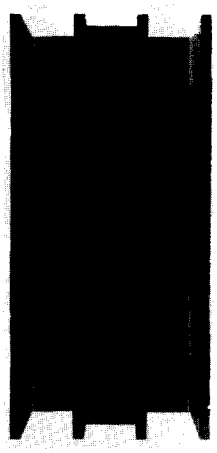


Claire Falkenstein



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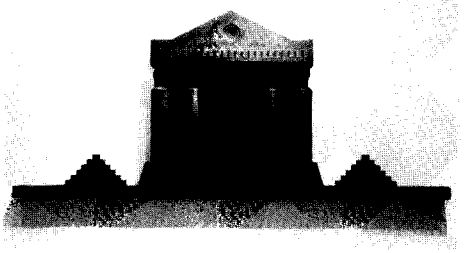

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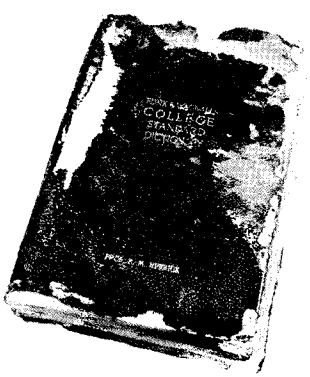

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Notebook

Mr. Kazin: Have you no sense of decency, sir?

by James W. Tuttleton

The status of social policy ideas—and the health and well being of American culture—can always be gauged by the rhetoric of political and cultural discourse in magazines of intellectual opinion. Recent evidence suggests that this rhetoric has reached a new low.

In the Fall issue of *Dissent,* in a piece called "They Made It! From the Notebooks of a New Yorker," Alfred Kazin denounces neoconservative Jewish intellectuals who have had an influential effect on social policy in the Reagan years. Hilton Kramer, editor of *The New Criterion,* Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary,* Irving Kristol, Lucy Dawidowicz, and others unnamed are all maligned for supporting conservative social policies or expressing political views that Kazin has the audacity to link—deviously and insinuatingly—to Senator McCarthy, John Birch, Franco, Botha, Pinochet, Nazi *Macht und Realpolitik,* state-sanctioned murder, and "the lust for war." It is an instance of the left-wing smear, with a broad brush, egregious enough to take one's breath away.

Each of the men and women under attack in this piece is perfectly capable of responding to Kazin or of defending the interests and policies of his or her magazine or writings. It would appear to be a fracas among Jews; the *goyim* will probably want to sit this one out. Yet although I am not a Jew myself, as may be apparent, I have both an intellectual and a personal interest in this internecine dispute between the privileged academic radical Kazin and the named and unnamed neoconservatives. Their disagreement affects the quality of intellectual life in America, and it bears upon liberal democratic values that I cherish. Not everyone may have read these Kazin "Notebooks," as printed in *Dissent,* so some account of them may be useful as a preliminary to my comments.

Kazin is convinced that neoconservative intellectual Jews have betrayed "their old bond with the oppressed, the proscribed, the everlasting victims piled up now in every street." To hear him tell it, if a Jew's solution to social problems isn't a leftist one, he has betrayed his religion and ethnicity. It doesn't matter to Kazin that there may be sincere policy differences and different political solutions about how to help the oppressed. In his view, virtue inheres only in the policies of the Left. Playing on any latent paranoia that may be going around, Kazin issues the usual warning that if neoconservatives think they have it made or that they have made America safe for Jews, through patriotic acts and words, they're all wrong. He maintains that Katherine Anne Porter, Allen Tate, John Updike, and Truman Capote have all let the cat of *What-They-Really-Think-of-Us* out of the bag: Gentiles don't like Jews, and when "the Reagan counterrevolution" is over, full-blown American anti-Semitism will rear its ugly head and the neo-Nazis will have their way. The only virtuous position for Jews, according to Kazin, is the radical

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social policy of the Left that he, among all others, has piously upheld. In the meantime, the neoconservative intellectuals—with their "abrasive habits of mind natural to political salvationists" and "hate" for leftist intellectuals—have brought cultural commentary to a new low. "Civility," Kazin opines, "has never been a feature of Jewish intellectuals in dispute."

It is this issue of civility that immediately interests me. The policy positions of the socialist Left are already bankrupt: not even the totalitarian governments of China, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe can be counted on to defend them any more. The question is, how will the socialist Left conduct itself in the face of the collapse of its lifelong unworkable utopian dream—with civility or incivility? Kazin's article in *Dissent* suggests the answer, and here arises the merely *personal* interest I have in his acerbity.

Complaining that neoconservatives have "contributed a new brutality to political journalism," Kazin turns to *The New Criterion* to illustrate his point that Hilton Kramer, the editor, "is regularly heated up by the seditious names of intellectuals he regards as a danger to the Republic. As they used to say in Berlin cafés before Hitler—'What one intellectual hates most in this world is another intellectual.'" Two illustrations of this disgusting Hitlerian association are offered: Kramer's comments on the Sontag Family Circle, and my review of a book by Irving Howe. Of the latter Kazin remarks:

> If Irving Howe publishes a series of Harvard lectures on Emerson, Kramer hires a venomously envious scholar, a specialist in Washington Irving (who no doubt has his private reasons for snapping at Jews) to knock Howe's book. Before getting to Emerson at all, the reviewer informs us that Howe has a "socialist" record and has published books on labor and the American Communist party.

Anyone who knows my credentials or who happens to have read my review-essay called "The Consolations of Emerson" in the April 1986 issue of *The New Criterion* will immediately realize—without recognizing me in the description—that I am the author of the review of Howe's *The American Newness: Culture and Politics in the Age of Emerson.* That Kazin did not name my name can be understood as pusillanimity on his part, or perhaps fear of a lawsuit. (If the latter, he needn't have worried: I leave libel lawsuits up to the Lillian Hellmans of this world.) There is no need to elaborate here the theme of that review—Howe's distortion of Emerson. But in the light of Kazin's pretensions to virtue and his accusation of neoconservative "brutality" in journalism, the intention behind Kazin's two sentences about me deserves to be laid bare.

1. *Before getting to Emerson at all* . . . I mentioned several of Howe's other books on literature as such. But I see no objection to my having cited Irving Howe's several publications on labor, socialism, or the Communist party as a way of establishing what I called the "political perspective from which all of his literary criticism issues."

2. *Kramer hires* . . . The idea that I am a paid hatchet-man, that my critical judgment can be bought, that I take orders from an editor to knock a book, for lucre, is a contemptible insinuation. Mr. Kramer has never suggested that I adopt a position about any book I have ever reviewed. Adhering to a party line is something Kazin knows much more about than I.

3. *a venomously envious scholar* . . . Whether I am a scholar must be left for scholars to decide, but of what am I "venomously envious"? Of Howe? Of his book? That he gave some Harvard lectures? Your guess is as good as mine. Of course I point out the book's central failure in trying to salvage Emerson for the socialist cause, but my criticism was impersonal, grounded on Howe's impracticable ideology and the distortion of Emerson. Readers will have to compare the review itself with Kazin's description. I will only quote this passage from my review: Howe, I wrote, "is a man of acute intelligence, critical insight, and compassionate sympathies. There is much that is likable about his style; a winsome personality shines

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through the prose." Are these remarks an instance of neoconservative journalistic brutality? The venom, if not the envy, is, I fear, Kazin's.

4. *a specialist in Washington Irving* . . . I confess to have published two editions of Irving's works, one for the Library of America and one for *The Complete Writings of Washington Irving* (under the aegis of the Center for Scholarly Editions), and to have written a number of essays about his fiction. If this makes me, for Kazin, a specialist in Irving studies, I won't complain. But the intent of the passage is something else: to insinuate that I am incompetent to review Howe's *The American Newness,* that the Age of Emerson is not my "field." Whether it is or isn't is up to readers to decide who know my several articles on Emerson, Hawthorne, and their contemporaries. But if anyone wants to check up on the religious movement that is the alleged subject of Howe's book, I will only steer him to *Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (1978), my study of Emerson's contemporary and Dickinson's "Preceptor." Higginson was an ardent disciple of the "Newness," and I discuss this movement, and his role in it, in a section in the book called "The Transcendental 'Newness.'"

5. *who no doubt has his private reasons for snapping at Jews* . . . What can Kazin possibly mean by this? Neither the Howe review nor any other piece I have ever written has criticized a writer because he is Jewish. But the claim is not that I am openly anti-Semitic; it is that I am *secretly* anti-Semitic, an even worse vilification. The insinuation is that under the pretext of literary criticism I derogate Jewish writers out of some private motive—or rather motives. (I seem to have more than one motive for snapping at Jews.) What these motives are Kazin doesn't say. I am simply smeared with the charge of anti-Semitism, and readers are meant to infer that they can pretty well ignore me from here on out because I am a devious and dishonest character from whom Jewish authors cannot expect candor or fairness. If I were an anti-Semite, why should I be pleased to have my work appear in *Commentary,* as I am, and why would this publication of the American Jewish Committee want to print it? Kazin's ethnic smear of me as a WASP anti-Semite, on no grounds whatsoever, is indeed just the kind of incivility, just the kind of journalistic brutality, just the kind of hate that he claims to find on the right.

In conclusion, I will only say that Kazin's two sentences, which are meant to assassinate my character and impugn my critical competence, suggest to me Joseph Welch's retort to Senator McCarthy: "You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?" An apology, at least, is in order—and not only from Alfred Kazin, for it was Irving Howe, after all, who as the editor of *Dissent* made the decision to publish this piece. But, frankly, I cannot take Kazin's insult in a personal way. For it is merely typical of the polemics of the fading Left, the death rattle of which can be distinctly heard in Irving Howe's *Socialism and America.* Deflated by the facts of history, Kazin has given up on the issues and the evidence and has taken refuge in the *ad hominem* smear.

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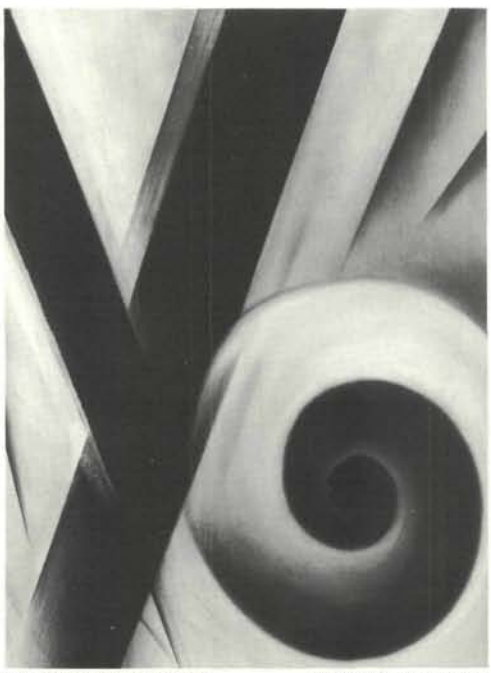

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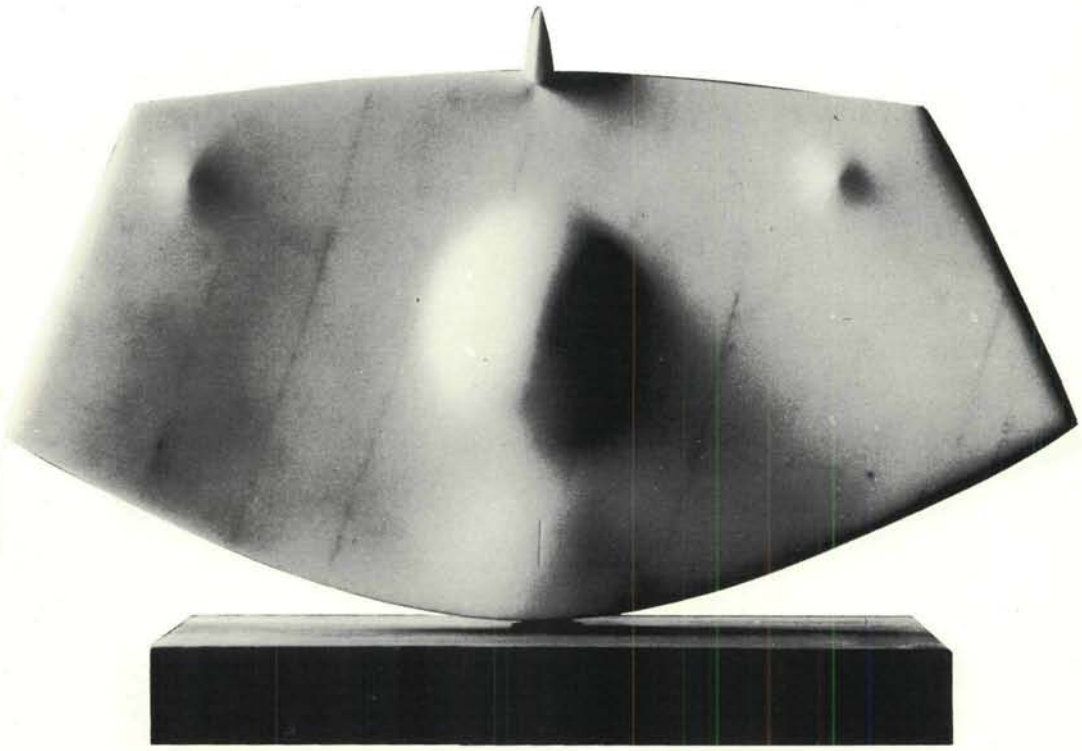

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